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ON THE COVERS

The **Dr. Banner/Hulk** cover (left) was drawn by Ed McGuinness and Jason Martin, with colors by Hi-Fi Design. Make your way to **page 62** for an exclusive report from the set of the upcoming "Hulk" movie. The **Movie Daredevil and Elektra** cover was painted by Greg Horn. Somersault over to **page 56** for a host of never-before-seen photos from February's "Daredevil" movie starring Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner.

Daredevil photos: Courtesy of 20th Century Fox

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COOL STUFF THROUGH THE MAIL

EXCLUSIVE OFFER

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #1 ACE

With 2002 being the Year of the Spider, what better way to wrap it up than with an authentic reprint of Spider-Man's first-ever solo debut? This *Wizard* ACE edition of *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 features an all-new acetate cover drawn by Humberto Ramos, an introduction by Marvel Spidey line editor Axel Alonso and an original "Twisted ToyFare Theatre" from the writers of *ToyFare* magazine! How could you pass this up? Web-sling your way to **page 32** to order yours today!

Campbell photo: AP

FROM THE TOP

FIRST PLACE

We've got a couple of "firsts" in this issue!

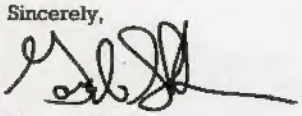
First off (heh heh), we're the first magazine to gain access to the super secret set of "The Hulk," starring Eric Bana and Jennifer Connelly and directed by Ang Lee. Read up on all the cool things we witnessed while they filmed in San Francisco (**page 62**). Also, we're the first to show new, never-before-seen photos from the "Daredevil" movie starring Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner. We got our hands on 20 cool pics, starting on **page 56**.

We also snuck onto the set to visit with Kevin Smith on location with his new film, "Jersey Girl," to talk comics and movies. Smith has always been a vocal guy so you have to read what he's got to say (**page 48**). Then Marvel gave us a sneak peek of one of their hot upcoming projects, *The Ultimate War*, which features a stunning crossover between the Ultimate X-Men and The Ultimates! It's over on **page 40**. Speaking of Marvel and the Ultimate line, remember those rumors that they were going to "Ultimize" their entire universe? Well, what if we told ya that it might not be such a bad idea? Hear our argument on **page 70**. If that doesn't get you hot under the collar, then wait until you read up on poor Bill Finger, one of the most overlooked creators in comics. I'll let the article speak for itself on **page 84**.

With Alan Moore's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen Vol. 2* well underway, we went back and revisited the original mini-series and uncovered lots of hidden extras and Easter Eggs that weren't plainly obvious the first time (**page 92**). You'd be surprised at all the stuff we found! Last but not least, check out four books we feel deserve more attention on **page 76**. They're not best sellers but they're great reads that many people may not know about.

Happy Thanksgiving everyone! Come back in 30 for our spectacular Year-End issue!

Sincerely,

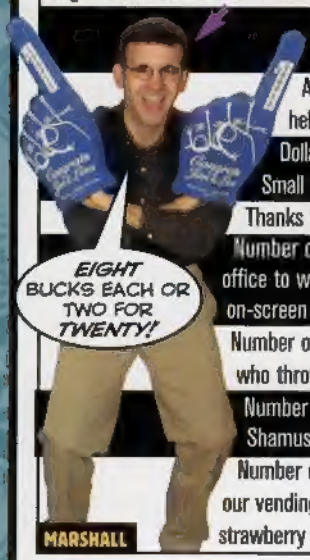


Gareb Shamus

BY THE NUMBERS

Statistics compiled when we put this bad boy together

Number of comic creators at Contributing Editor Jim McLauchlin's wedding	23
Number of bids on an online auction for keepsakes from the wedding (like the foam fingers that Intern Dave Marshall is sporting here)	18
Number of staffers who helped Editor Brian Cunningham move	2
Along with the furniture, number of comic boxes they helped him lug	52
Dollar amount Staff Writer Casey Seijas spent at September's Small Press Expo on independent comics	290
Thanks to losing his receipts, amount he'll be reimbursed	0
Number of people who piled into Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum's office to watch Editor Brian Cunningham squirm at his on-screen debut on the "Spider-Man" DVD	10
Number of things thrown at the TV (including a shoe—honestly, who throws a shoe?) when Brian first appeared	4
Number of days before Brian gets fired when Publisher Gareb Shamus sees he got more screen time than him	2
Number of crappy chocolate Pop-Tarts we gotta buy from our vending machine before we get to the awesome strawberry ones behind them	8



MASTHEAD

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MAGIC WORDS

CAPTAIN AMERICA: RACIST? . . . WOLVIE/SABRETOOTH: BROS? . . . & SPIDEY'S LOST VIRGINITY!

Holy crap! Or perhaps more correctly, holy Cap! Both the current *Captain America* series and the soon-to-be-released *Truth* series chronicling the first, experimental, and oh-so-African-American Cap are generating more mail than mom and apple pie combined. Please make no mistake: The overwhelming majority of *Wizard*ites out there are diggin' on the new *Cap* and looking forward to *Truth*, but as always, there are a few dissenting voices. Some of those voices will be heard here. Hey, this *is* a democracy after all, right?

Jim,

While I enjoy the art on the new run of *Captain America*, I have to question the approach, which smacks of propaganda. It's very easy to stir emotions relating Cap with our recent national tragedy. I'm going to reserve judgment, however, until this storyline is completed. What I'd really like to see in a future issue, though, is how John Ney Rieber feels Cap would deal with the current administration's rollover of civil liberties. It was Benjamin Franklin, one of our first patriots, who said, "They that give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." It was my understanding that part of Cap's character was a great love of the U.S. Constitution, as well as the Bill of Rights.

Josh Kelly
josh1138@yahoo.com

Hmmm-ba! Hot-button issues, indeed! Is the new *Cap* series just firing up a jingoistic public with Cap's battle against terrorism? Not so, according to *Cap* scribe John Ney Rieber. "If I manage to do what I'm *trying* to do with the first six-issue storyarc, you won't be tempted to say that the work smacks of propaganda," Rieber says. "It will scream *anti*-propaganda."

Rieber elucidates: "Propaganda aims to tell individuals what they ought to think. I want people to *ask* reality-based questions. I've received a heartening amount of mail from people who seem to be doing just that. My belief is that it does people no damn good to be spoon-fed solutions to moral questions. Nor does it make any particular sense to me to have Cap leaping swiftly to conclusions. In Cap's struggle to find his own answers, the reader will hopefully question, and find some answers as well. There is no propaganda knocking down your door. We're just looking to call up some potentially uneasy questions."

Oh, yeah—one more important point. "I'm pleased that you're going to reserve judgment on the storyline until you've read it in its entirety," Rieber adds. "Here's a little more Franklin for you: 'Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.' Hang on to the end, and you'll see what the *whole* story is meant to be."

Dear Jim,

I don't know what all the fuss is about Marvel's planned *Truth* mini-series. After all, who *doesn't* want a racist origin for Cap? Cap's one of the few heroes left who isn't

PHOTO: MARC BOMBALLS

BUNNY AWARD

Jim,

Regarding *Wizard* #131's "Mort of the Month," the Marvel Comics character Peeper...

Should I ask Marvel for some money or something for using my name?

Vincent Peeper
Royal Oak, MI

Let's see: You were saddled at birth with the unfortunate moniker "Vincent Peeper," *and* you're the namesake for a Marvel character with giant, pop-outta-your-skull fishy eyeballs. I'd say your best bet is to keep your head down and stay quiet. The less attention you attract, the better.

jaded, edgy, and dark; instead he's hopeful, one of the last "innocent" heroes. Who the hell wants that?

Besides, think of all the possibilities such revisionism holds: "Ben Parker, Pedophile!" "Thomas Wayne, Drug Dealer!" "Clark Kent, Wife Abuser!"

Yes Fandom, the cynicism of The Authority cannot exist peacefully next to the innocent hope of such a Boy Scout as Cap! We should not rest until every single hero is severely screwed up in some way, and all these whiny losers who think heroes should actually be *heroes* and that comics can entertain without post-modern tinkering are driven out.

Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go throw up.

Mike Costantino
mcspiderman@aol.com

Sooooo...having the original Captain America be a black man (horror of horrors!) is tantamount to making Superman a wife-beater? Now if you'll excuse me, I think *I'll* go throw up.

Do yourself a favor and follow the advice of our first letter-writer: Reserve judgment. Read the series. Then go off on your half-cocked rant.

Or, better yet, follow Benjamin Franklin's advice, quoted above.

Dear *Wizard*,

I just reread *Origin*, the "origin of Wolverine" story, and noticed something that may tell more about who James Howlett, Wolverine, really is.

Check out *Origin* #3, p. 15. After the climatic fight in which John Howlett (Wolverine's father) and Thomas Logan (Dog's father) are killed, we see Elizabeth Howlett standing over the bodies, laying about three feet apart. Somewhat surprisingly, instead of going to her husband John, Elizabeth bends over Thomas Logan and says "Oh Thomas...What have I done?"

From that point on in the book, James Howlett looks stunningly like Thomas Logan. This leads me to the conclusion that James Howlett, a.k.a. Wolverine, is the product of an affair between Thomas Logan and Elizabeth Howlett! This would also mean that Dog (presumably Sabretooth) and Wolverine are half-brothers. This could explain the two characters' similar mutant powers and characteristics. Does anyone agree with my theory?

Brian Kenealy
sentry2k2@aol.com

No less an *Origin* authority than writer Paul Jenkins agrees with your theory. "Let's put it this way," Jenkins says. "If I were Wolverine, I'd request a DNA test."

Dear *Wizard*,

In *New X-Men* #126, Cassandra Nova calls Wolverine by the name "James." He doesn't flinch, or even say anything about it. But I thought that the ending of *Origin* implied that Wolverine never finds out his real name. So why doesn't he do anything when Cassandra calls him James?

Matt Schlein
Keller, TX

I'll tell ya why: Read *Wolverine* #175. When (potential half-brother) Sabretooth is taunting Wolverine, he lets him in on a not-so-secret secret. Wolverine's healing factor heals not just his body, but his *mind* as well. All of Wolverine's memories are there. He's just "scabbed over" the memories that are too painful for him to deal with.

Bottom line: On some level, perhaps subconsciously, Wolverine *knows* he is James Howlett. Cassandra Nova is definitely a powerful-ass enough telepath to dig up a subconscious memory. Wolverine didn't act surprised, because on some level *he wasn't surprised*. He knows deep down just who he is, and he'd recognize it every day if he weren't such a giant wussbag about it.

Hey Mr. Jim,

With comic book movies coming out by the dozens these days...

1) What is your favorite comic book movie adaptation of all time?

2) What new film are you most looking forward to?

Anthony Lacy
San Diego, CA

HEY! IT'S PEN PALS...

Like a title? Hate a character? Just have something to say? Then write your favorite comic company and let 'em know what you're thinking. Send your thoughts to the following addresses, but be sure to send your letters in care of a particular book or editor. Power to the people!

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1) There are many good ones, but I'd probably have to go with the original "Superman" flick. They really played to what is the strength of the character—that if this Strange Visitor From Another Planet did indeed exist, we'd all be absolutely awestruck by him.

And most importantly, they absolutely delivered on the promise: "You will believe a man can fly."

2) "Daredevil." I'm a bit prejudiced in the favor of Mark Steven Johnson, the guy who wrote and directed the flick, as we're both from Minnesota, Land of 10,000 Lakes and All Good Things. But the guy's a competitive kickboxer, so he knows action, and he's a lifelong—and I mean *lifelong*—DD fan, so he knows the character. I wait for this with bated breath.

Yeah, I know I can take Altoids for that. I just choose not to.

Gentlemen,

Lately, I've been seeing an awful lot of celebrities in Marvel books. At first I assumed the "guest stars" had okayed the appearances. But now there are so many, I'm not so sure.

So I'm curious. Do these people even know they're in a comic book? And if they don't, can they sue when they find out?

Paula Rice
Holyoke, MA

Well, I know actress Shannon Elizabeth knows she was in *The Ultimates* #3 'cause she told me last night when I was hip-deep in...ah, never mind.

But seriously, folks, the answer is "yes, they know." Writer Ron Zimmerman has made frequent use of celeb cameos in works such as *Spider-Man: Sweet Charity* and *Spider-Man: Get Kraven*, employing such glitterati as Jay Leno and even "Simpsons" developer Sam Simon, both buddies of Zimmerman's.

"The celebrities in my comics were delighted and flattered to be in them," Zimmerman says. "But I strongly recommend you know them and/or get their written permission to use them, since comics are not considered 'news' or 'parody' where there is free usage."

Dear *Wizard*,

With the rush of '80s properties being turned into new comics, I was wondering: Will this trend bleed into other decades? Will "Jonny Quest" suddenly get a new series? Or "The Herculoids"?

Trevor Reese
Eureka, CA

Will it bleed into other decades? Absolutely. But you're moving in the wrong direction.

The '70s, my friend, are already over. So no Jonny Quest or Herculoids. That's already too old-school to fly today. Some comic publishers are still sniffing around Star

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QUICK HITS

THE READERS STRIKE BACK!

"A battle between Goku and Superman in your 'East vs. West' article [*Wizard* #133]? Superman wouldn't have a chance in Hell to even get a punch in."

—Rahsaan K. Woods, rkwoods2@hotmail.com

"Good call on Spider-Man vs. Vash the Stampede in 'East vs. West.' Vash would embarrass the wall-crawler."

—Michael Scott, Tulare, CA

"I was skeptical about the *Fantastic Four* relaunch with #60. But I found myself looking at one of the best *FF*s I've ever read. Mark Waid's story was hot and Mike Wieringo's pencils sealed the deal."

—Joseph E. Toth, Pine Bush, NY

"The movie storyboarding 'Basic Training' by Colin Grant [*Wizard* #133] was great! Just when I think you've done everything, something new appears!"

—Johanna Russell, Gardena, CA

"I really want to see Jordan Atherton, John Romita Jr's niece, live a long and successful life. The art marathon John Jr. did to raise money for her [*Wizard* #131] was truly remarkable."

—Ricky Butler, Burkeville, VA

"'The Crow' gets a B- grade in 'Film School' [*Wizard* #132]? That movie was A+ all the way!"

—Joseph Cogan, Portland, OR

"No need to spare feelings with the D grade for 'Fantastic Four' in your 'Film School' ratings. Just give it the F it deserves."

—Mike Kearney, Denver, CO

"I really dig the letters from guys in the comic biz about the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11th of last year ['Magic Words,' *Wizard* #133]. There were a couple tear-jerkers in there."

—Joseph Knitt, St. Germain, WI

"Thanks for all your coverage on the Sept. 11 events. Very touching, and not expected from a comics magazine."

—Brian Garrity, New York, NY

"I think we're *still* awash in a sea of X-Men. At least the titles are worth reading now."

—Greg Randall, Pittsburgh, PA

"Carlos Pacheco keeps getting better and better. After seeing the preview [*Wizard* #133], I'm really looking forward to *JLA/JSA*!"

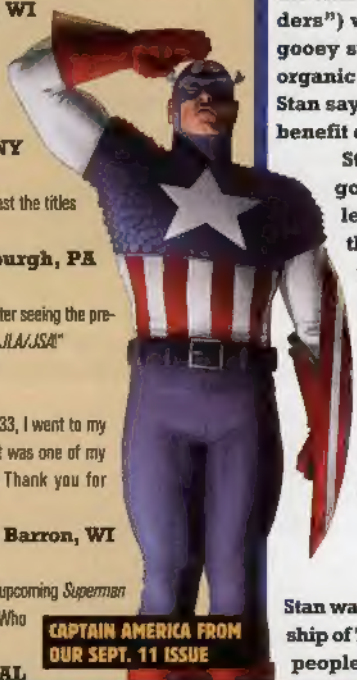
—Greg Paulson, Tacoma, WA

"After reading the article on *Fables in Wizard* #133, I went to my local comic store and picked up the first issue. It was one of my first Vertigo stories, but I liked what I saw. Thank you for your insights!"

—Allen Klingelhoets, Barron, WI

"I think Scott McDaniel [former *Batman* penciler and upcoming *Superman* penciler] is the best artist in the comic industry. Who agrees with me?"

—Tashi Moore, Dothan, AL



CAPTAIN AMERICA FROM OUR SEPT. 11 ISSUE

Blazers, Speed Racer and even Battlestar Galactica. But the sun is quickly setting on their viability as well.

No, crazy as it seems, there will soon be nostalgia for the '90s. That means you WILL see a new *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* comic come year 2014. And it will be huge. Even huger than that? The *Pokémon* revival in 2018. Mark your calendars.

Yeah, I know it seems stupid and you hate Pokémon and you think it's kid stuff. But guess what? G.I. Joe and the friggin' Transformers were kid stuff that I hated. These things happen, and you can't stop them.

And look—If I'm still in this dead-end job in 2018 and it doesn't happen, well, you can write me a letter and tell me I was wrong.

Jimbo,

I've read all the message boards. I've heard all the controversy. And now, here in "Magic Words," I wanna settle it once and for all.

Y'see, this li'l indie flick called "Spider-Man" gave Peter Parker "organic" web-shooters (i.e., Pete's body made the webbing), while the comic version had Pete create mechanical shooters. Me, I'm a purist and tend to like precocious Pete Parker's savvy scientific self.

But, for the luvva Pete (Ha!), I need to know what Stan "The Man" Lee's take is! Why didn't he have the bite of that fateful radioactive spider give Peter Parker natural web-making ability? Did he think it was too, I dunno, creepy? I, and every other red-blooded American, needs to know.

Sylvester Sloan
Des Moines, IA

Stan entertained the notion of making Spider-Man even more spidery, with natural webs as part of the package. But in a day and age when the frail sensibilities of consumers (Marvel publisher Martin Goodman thought the character would flop because, "People don't like spiders") were of great import, Stan steered away from gooey stuff flowing from Pete's pores. "Indeed, I felt organic web-shooters might seem a little too creepy," Stan says. "But I must admit, his web-shooting without benefit of web-shooters looked *great* in the movie."

Stan says if he had to do it all over again, he'd still go with the mechanical devices. "But we have learned a great lesson here," he says. "Namely, the fact that it might actually be possible to come up with an idea even better than mine!"

Magic Jimmy,

Why is it that everyone in the comics biz starts in their late 20s or even older? Stan Lee was only 18 or 19 when he became editor at Timely Comics, right?

And I'm seeing all these signs with maps on them saying, "You are here." How do they know where I am? Are they psychic or something?

Stan McNutt
Waldorf, MD

Stan was a mere 18 when he assumed the editor-in-chiefship of Timely Comics in 1941. "But in those days, young people were older than young people are now," Stan

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LETTER ART

The mega-talented creator of this month's best envelope takes home a hardcover copy of *Alan Moore's Tomorrow Stories* Vol. 1, courtesy of WildStorm and DC Comics! Those guys are so cool for donating their stuff, we owe them bigger than Jack B. Quick owes Flintstone Vitamins for giving him that big brain! Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address and a list of characters depicted on the back of the envelope.

ENVELOPE OF THE MONTH.....THE PRIZE

SWINGIN' SPIDEY, John Nunley, Delta, CO

SMALLVILLE'S LANA & CLARK, Tall Apt, Oak Park, MI

HARLEY QUINN, Roy Gonzales, Los Fresnos, TX

CALVIN & HOBBES & DEADPOOL, James Godfrey, Hampton Bays, NY

cautions. "Or maybe it's the other way around. I can never remember."

The "You are here" people know where you are by tracking you via the transmission chip they imbedded under your skin shortly after birth. The doctor's smack on your butt turns it on.

Dear *Wizard*,

In the recent Kevin Smith-written *Spider-Man/Black Cat: The Evil that Men Do* series, the Black Cat said of she and Spider-Man, "We were doin' the nasty—Nothing more, nothing less." Which begs the question: Who was Peter Parker's (*ahem*) first? Was it Mary Jane Watson? Betty Brant? Liz Allen? Gwen Stacy? Which girlfriend do you think took him to the "next level"?

Ken Holtzhouser
Mattoon, IL

My money's on Mary Jane, that little minx. But the aforementioned Kevin Smith bets a different way. "My money's on Felicia Hardy," Smith says. "Peter probably did a good job of holding onto his webbing until she came along."

Geez, if it was the Black Cat that would have been after MJ, Betty, Liz, Gwen, and probably even Debbie Whitman for all I know.

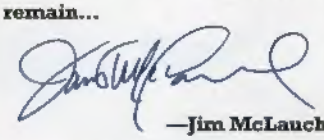
Guess another one of those spider-powers is "patience."

Dear *Wizard*,

Are shaved heads the new mullet?

Michael B. Conway
Memphis, TN

Well, if that ain't an end note, I don't know what is. Get it? *End* note? Ah, never mind. We be back in 30 days, give or take a few hours. Until then, I remain...



—Jim McLauchlin

If a tree falls in the forest, and Jim McLauchlin isn't there to hear it, well, then he doesn't really give a damn.

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THE MOD SQUAD

Straczynski pens Marvel's new adults-only Squadron Supreme

Joe Quesada issued the ultimate challenge to J. Michael Straczynski on Squadron Supreme. Now the Marvel E-I-C's biggest fear is that JMS might deliver.

"Joe said, in essence, 'Take off the kid gloves, and take this to the wall,'" Straczynski said of his upcoming series *Supreme Power*, the writer's new take on the Squadron Supreme and Marvel's answer to the JLA. "I said to Joe to be really sure he means that, because if he says take it to the wall, that's what I'll do. That meant putting it under the MAX line because that's where the wall is. This is the real world, and it has all the elements thereof: language, sensuality, content, violence, you name it. I'm writing this as if it were a series for HBO or Showtime. I just wanted to be able to take the gloves off and go for it."

According to Quesada, he didn't see any way to do a new Squadron Supreme book unless he put it under Marvel's mature-reader MAX banner.

"We're not going to shy away with this book," explained Quesada, who will edit the title through the Marvel Knights line. "We're not going to let happen to this book what's happened to other superhero-type books that the creators really wanted to give you a real-world definition of superheroes. I think the time is right for that and I think JMS is the right guy to do this. If he wants to go all the way, he can go all the way."

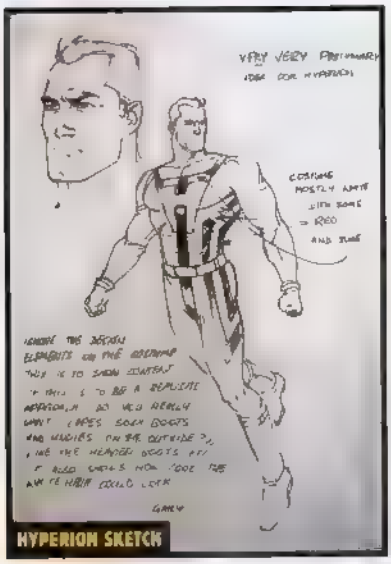
The new ongoing series, planned for mid-2003, will be quite a departure from writer Mark Gruenwald's classic 12-issue 1985-86 maxi-series, which defined the Squadron.

"The names of the characters are all the same, their powers are for the most part the same, and the premise of the book, as with Mark's, is to examine how they affect the world," explained Straczynski. "Mark's book picked up *in medias res*, already in the action, with the characters in place and hinting at how they came about. I wanted to really track their story from the arrival of [Squadron leader and Superman knock-off] Hyperion as an infant, and how that event not only changes the world, but in many ways is a direct causal link to the rise of the other characters."

According to Straczynski (*Amazing Spider-Man*), after the team forms, the story will begin to focus on just what a planet would be like if superpowered beings existed. Although JMS admits the idea of superheroes in a "real world setting" isn't new, he thinks he can add a few new twists to the genre.

"What made Mark's original work so

SUPREME MEASURES J. Michael Straczynski says the only way to do his take on the Squadron Supreme (above) was to publish it under Marvel's mature readers' imprint, MAX. Yay for swearing!



groundbreaking was this realistic approach, which was really the progenitor and nexus point that gave birth to such intellectual progeny as *Watchmen*," JMS explained. "I think there was some great work done in that area in *Marvels* and *Miracleman* but I think we can go even further. I want this to be a platform to explore politics, religion, society, responsibility, and, ultimately, the question of power: what it means, what it does, and what it costs. Which is why I want the book itself to be titled *Supreme Power*. The group will be known and referred to as the Squadron Supreme, but I wanted *Supreme Power* for the title because it echoes the adage, 'Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' So that being the case, how much more prey to corruption is Supreme Power?"

Teaming on the title with Straczynski is the writer's *Midnight Nation* collaborator, artist Gary Frank. According to the penciler, he was sold on *Supreme Power* as soon as he heard JMS was writing.

"I like to draw real people, even if they occasionally put on costumes and have super-fights," said Frank. "Joe writes real people. I don't think he takes the genre for granted. Even when things become fantastic, there is a grounded feeling to his characters and a subtlety that hasn't always been present in mainstream comics."

Both Straczynski and Frank said while the Squadron will don costumes throughout the series, not every character will have one. Why? One simple reason. Not every character needs a costume.

"We don't very often ask as readers, 'Why are they wearing a costume?' or 'What are they going to do with their powers?'" said Frank. "What Joe is doing with *SP* feels to me like the same kind of thing he did with *Rising Stars*. If you discovered that you could fly or were bulletproof, would you say, 'Great! Now where can I get a cape and some day-glow pantyhose?' Having said all that, there are costumes when there are reasons for them. They won't be the same as those in the original series, though."

Straczynski also admitted he still hasn't chosen the final lineup for the series, but fans can expect appearances in *Supreme Power* by the most powerful characters from *Squadron Supreme*, such as Hyperion, Whizzer and Power Princess, with some tweaks and reinterpretations.

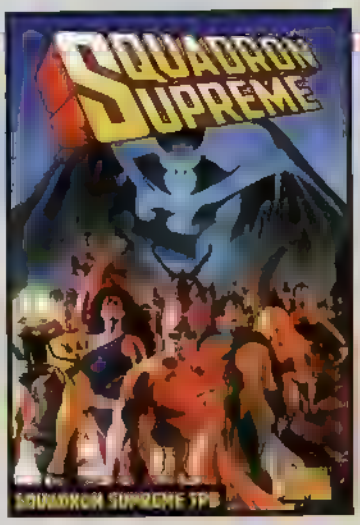
"I'm still exploring the characters and seeing which ones I can make most use of, and which can be updated in interesting ways," said JMS. "The problem is that Mark did a great job of introducing and creating these characters, and if I can't make something more interesting or colorful, I really don't want to screw it up by changing it just 'cause I feel like it. It should build upon what came before, and elaborate upon it, without peeing in the pond." ■ **MIKE COTTON**

THE ORIGINAL SQUADRON

HOW 'SQUADRON SUPREME' CHANGED COMICS FOREVER

Before *Watchmen*, before *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* or *Kingdom Come*, one book redefined comics–Mark Gruenwald's *Squadron Supreme*.

"I re-read [*Squadron Supreme*] after we finished with *Kingdom Come* and saw it for the groundbreaking piece of work it was," admitted writer Mark Waid. "*The Authority*, newcomers today might be surprised to learn, did not launch the notion of 'superheroes attacking real-world problems'–that began here, under the pen of writer Mark Gruenwald. Characters who were truly flawed, heroes who lived in a world where actions had consequences...it was all there, and there first."



The now-classic [illegible] mini-series brought superheroes into the real world facing real problems. The Squadron dealt with an America that was recovering from a war, rationed food, had gun control problems and had lost faith in its leadership. Under Gruenwald, the Squadron took over the country, began brainwashing criminals into obeying the law and even began forcibly disarming the public to prevent a revolt.

The Squadron was originally conceived as an homage to DC Comics' JLA, so Gruenwald also redefined how those classic heroes interacted. Hyperion and Nighthawk, based on Superman and Batman, weren't played as buddy superheroes but as rivals with two very different views on crime, punishment and their roles as heroes.

The series was also the first time a speedster, like the Squadron's Whizzer, based on the Flash, was seen eating tons of food in a day to keep his hyperactive metabolism going, a trait that was later worked into Flash continuity.

But beyond simple recasting of characters' attitudes and habits, *Squadron Supreme* made a statement about what the world would be like if superheroes really existed. Would they be seen as heroes, villains, gods, dictators or fascists? Gruenwald's story posed all of these questions. The series also didn't pull any punches when it came to a final reckoning. Heroes didn't just kill, they also died–and died horribly–and comics were never the same again. ■ **MC & JESSE THOMPSON**

A GOOD TIME FOR A DIME

'All bets are off' with Superman's Earth-shattering 10-cent adventure

Fans have been waiting for DC's answer to Marvel's "Ultimate" line, but come January 2003, not only will they get a glimpse of DC's version of "Ultimate Superman," they'll also get it for only a dime

Based on the overwhelming success of last January's *Batman: The 10¢ Adventure*, which in turn spawned the "Bruce Wayne: Murderer" and "Fugitive" storyarcs, DC has announced they will give Superman a similar treatment with the aptly titled *Superman: The 10¢ Adventure*. While you won't see an updated retelling of Clark Kent's evolution into an Ultimized version of DC's flagship superhero, series writer Steve Seagle plans to make fans remember why, when it comes to the heroes of the DCU, Superman is the end all and be all.

"I think that the main thing that I'm trying to get across in *Superman* is that he's the first, the best, the king of the superheroes of the DC Universe—if not all universes," explained Seagle, who makes his debut on the series with *The 10¢ Adventure* along with new series penciler Scott McDaniel (*Batman*). "When [Superman Group Editor] Eddie [Berganza] told me I'd be writing the *Superman* 10-center, I thought that was a really cool thing and very nice, but then I told him, 'I don't want to get rid of anything, I don't want to reinvent anything, but I want to start clean.' It doesn't make sense to totally change everything about him, but it does make sense to make what's cool about him cool again."

While last January's *Batman* "10-center" served as the first chapter in the 29-issue "Bruce Wayne: Murderer" and "Fugitive" mega-crossovers, Seagle has no plans to use his *Superman* debut as the springboard for a multi-part storyarc.

"I thought the *Batman 10¢ Adventure* was really good, but in a way it wasn't an issue that was reader friendly in that it started a big multi-part story," said Seagle. "I'm definitely going to put some stuff in that'll set up events in the other books, but it'll be a self-contained, one-part story."

Yet Seagle quickly admitted that his *10¢ Adventure* will still have a surprise or two in store for fans.

"The last page is a kick in the ass," Seagle hinted. "It shows you that all bets are off. I'm not going to get into details. I'm known for writing a lot of panels, but this isn't going to be like that. It's going to be very fast, but there's still gonna be a lot going on in it."

And there's certainly a lot going on throughout the Superman line during the month of January. Starting off with *Superman: The Man of Steel* #134, which also serves as a 40-page series finale, fans will see John Henry Irons (a.k.a. Steel) don the Entropy Armor one last time in hopes to repair the damage done during last August-September's "Ending Battle" crossover. Yet taking on the mantle of Steel will have grave repercussions, and feeds into the *Superman/Darkseid: Apokolips Now* one-shot by Mark Schultz with pencils by Mike McKone, which sees the entire Superman family (including Supes, Supergirl, Krypto and even the Eradicator) set off to rescue Irons from Apokolips.

DROPPING A DIME The Man of Steel begins a whole new direction under new writer Steve Seagle with *Superman: The 10¢ Adventure*.

Meanwhile, Seagle has plans to explore the inner psyches of Superman. Superman will begin to question why he wants to be perceived as a human (considering that he is an alien) and why he's taken on the responsibility of protecting a planet that's not even his homeworld. Also, his significant other will be tackling issues of her own.

"I'm planning on showing the stranger side of what it's like to be married to Superman," hinted Seagle. "Instead of seeing them hanging out, you'll see what it's like when your husband vanishes, then you see him on the news in Africa. I think that would be pretty weird."

Overall, as Marvel has successfully achieved with their Ultimate line, Seagle hopes to show why Superman is not only the most powerful and respected hero in the DCU, but also, what makes him arguably the coolest.

"His powers will be out front, the alien stuff will be out front—he's going to be cool again," said Seagle. "Other DCU heroes are going to be like, 'Wow you're Superman!' instead of, 'Hey, how's it going Clark?'" ■ CASEY SELLAS

GET READY FOR JOE-BOTS

G.I. Joe crew, Transformers scheduled to collide with 2003 crossover

They said it would never happen—again.

Well they were wrong, because one of retro fans' wildest fantasies becomes a reality when the worlds of *G.I. Joe* and the *Transformers* collide next year.

Old-school fans will recall this isn't the first time Hasbro's über-franchises have crossed paths, most notably in 1986's *G.I. Joe and the Transformers* mini-series from Marvel.

However, both Dreamwave and Devil's Due insist that this latest crossover will shed the stigma left by its poorly conceived predecessor, promising that there's more than meets the eye when it comes to this millennium's crossover.

"We're not just viewing this as a crossover for two toys," explained *G.I. Joe* writer and Devil's Due President Josh Blaylock. "This isn't just something that we're putting together to capitalize on the success of *G.I. Joe* and *Transformers*. We're total geeks for this stuff and want to make this the coolest friggin' crossover we possibly can."

Tentatively slated for June 2003, both publishers will release separate prestige format mini-series. Final storylines are pending approval from Hasbro, but each publisher has suggested an "Elseworlds-style format" featuring standalone tales set in alternate continuity. Dreamwave is scheduled to release a three-issue mini-series with art by Dan Norton and a writer to be determined. Expect to see a 48- to 64-page one-shot from Devil's Due.

Transformers: G1 artist and Dreamwave President Pat Lee felt that working independently would be creatively beneficial for both studios. "As cool as it sounds, logistically it would be a freakin' nightmare," laughed Lee. "It would be very difficult to try to explain and coordinate all this, so we opted to do things separately. This gives us both the opportunity to develop scenarios that you wouldn't normally see and not have to worry about the storylines' impact in a permanent sense." ■ JAMES McDONOUGH

ENTER 'THE GRAY AREA'

Spidey artist Romita Jr. unveils creator-owned project

While most superstar artists constantly strive for the spotlight, John Romita Jr. has a much different goal: *The Gray Area*.

According to Romita (*Amazing Spider-Man*), he'll pencil and co-write his first creator-owned series though Marvel beginning next year as a six-issue mini-series titled *The Gray Area*. The series, which Romita's working on with screenwriter Glen Brunswick, follows a dirty cop who's trapped in limbo between Heaven and Hell after he dies.

"I've been thinking about this idea for years," explained Romita. "We're mixing in ideas of religion and dogma and we're writing our own world. The Gray Area is where most of us go after death. Ten percent of us go to Heaven. Ten percent of us go to Hell. And the rest of us go to this area, where we try to improve."

Romita explained after centuries of housing those who are either on their way to Heaven or Hell, the Gray Area's become quite an unruly place, therefore the still unnamed dirty cop is asked to become the warden and handle the rampant problems of the growing populace.

"In the Gray Area, you can work towards an end," said Romita. "He's going to use this opportunity to improve his stature. He's trying to find a way to slide into the real afterlife."

Romita, best known for *ASM*, said fans won't have to worry about him leaving that book to devote time to his new project.

"I'm only working on *The Gray Area* in between issues *of Spider-Man*," said the artist. "I'll stay on that book as long as they'll have me." ■ MK

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THE BUZZBIN

'X-MEN 2' TOO COOL While Nightcrawler may be the only new mutant making a big splash in "X2" on May 2, 2003, look for a few quick cameos from characters such as Beast and Gambit, according to director Bryan Singer!

WORKING VACATION Top Cow mainstay Michael Turner just got back from a two-week Hawaiian vacation, and filled four sketchbooks with drawings for two new upcoming 2003 properties, which he will debut (*ahem*) in the pages of *Wizard*.

HULK HAPPENINGS With Mike Deodato recently announced as the new regular artist on *The Incredible Hulk*, writer Bruce Jones has some big plans for some former Hulk villains. According to Jones, who shunned high-profile baddies in the book to this point, to do this villain sooner would have been an abomination.

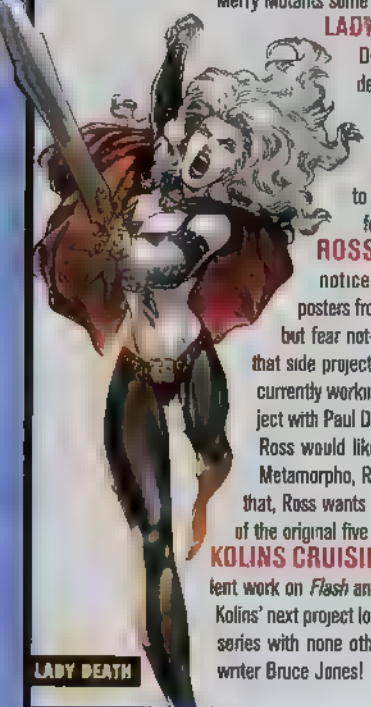
THE INCREDIBLE HULK

DARK F---ING HORSE Sources close to Dark Horse say that the publisher recently nabbed the rights to publish a series based on the MTV hit series "The Osbournes." No word on whether or not the series will include a censor button though.

THE GREEN TEAM So who's going to be picking up Ollie Queen's emerald bow once Brad Meltzer leaves *Green Arrow* with issue #21? The frontrunner could be current *Green Lantern* writer and Meltzer's former college roommate Judd Winick.

FF: THE END? Don't be surprised if Stan Lee's working for Marvel again soon. Rumor has it that Lee and artist John Romita Jr. are currently planning *Fantastic Four: The End*, a one-shot much like Peter David and Dale Keown's recent *Hulk: The End* project. Reportedly, the project will be Lee's vision of the last FF tale.

MARC'S MUTANTS Sources indicate that Top Cow and Marvel are in the early stages of negotiations for a possible inter-company event. As of yet, no details have been confirmed, but don't be surprised to see former *Uncanny X-Men* artist and Top Cow CEO Marc Silvestri working on Marvel's Merry Mutants some time soon.


LADY DEATH

LADY DEATH RESURRECTED Despite Chaos! Comics' financial demise, Lady Death may be returning to comics–CrossGen comics. Rumor has it that CrossGen is interested in purchasing the rights to the character and revamping her for an all-new series.

ROSS POSTINGS You may have noticed Alex Ross' line of JLA/JSA posters from DC Direct have come to a halt, but fear not–Ross should be getting back to that side project within the next year or so. He's currently working on a massive painted JLA project with Paul Dini, but once work for that wraps, Ross would like to complete the JLA set with Metamorpho, Red Tornado and Deadman. After that, Ross wants to paint more JSAers, and a set of the original five members of the Teen Titans!

KOLINS CRUISING Hot on the heels of his excellent work on *Flash* and *Thing: Freakshow*, artist Scott Kolins' next project looks to be a Wolverine/Hulk miniseries with none other than current *Incredible Hulk* writer Bruce Jones!

FROM FAN TO THE MAN

JSA fan club founder gets crack at writing

New writer Jim Beard is flying higher than Hawkman. A lifelong fan of the JSA, Beard's first published story will hit in November in *JLA/JSA: Secret Files*.

Beard founded an online JSA fan club back in 1999 while working at the Toledo Museum of Art. When DC revived the title, Beard's club exploded, attracting 800 members, including Mr. JSA Geoff Johns.

JSA

Over the next several years, Johns and Beard became friends, often discussing various intricacies of the JSA.

"He's a real passionate guy," praised *JSA* writer Johns. "He was always telling me, 'Why don't you write this story?' and finally I said, 'Why don't you?'" So, that's what Beard did.

The story was so good, Johns had Beard rush it over to Editor Ivan Cohen. Although Beard's name was familiar as a letter writer, the quality of his submission alone would decide its fate.

After a month of silence, Beard got the call on his birthday—DC would buy his story. "It's surreal," reflected Beard. "The coolest thing is that these are characters that I have loved and read all my life, and I'm putting words in their mouth. DC's letting me do this!" ■ DAVE MARSHALL

RODI TO PERDITION

Crossing over into CrossGen's Code 6

Think your family is weird? Imagine if your dad was a superhero, your mom slayed vampires, your sister was a warrior princess, and your brother investigated alien abductions—including his own!

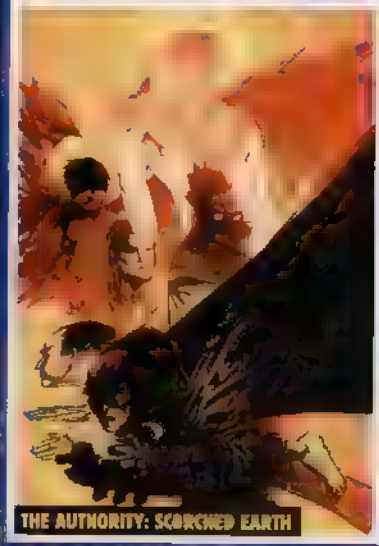
Robert Rodi (*Codename: Knockout*) and Belgian sensation Mauricet (a.k.a. MoMo) team up this January on *The Crossovers*, a mind-bending parody of all things generic and suburban. Published monthly under CrossGen's new Code 6 imprint and sporting a quirky visual style, *The Crossovers* promises to be anything but predictable.

Brainstorming for story ideas, Rodi was disappointed by a comic book market saturated with genre specific titles. Rather than simply add to the scores of superhero, fantasy, sci-fi and horror books on the rack, Rodi burned to revitalize clichéd generic conventions with something vibrantly original. Suddenly, it came to him.

"I thought, why don't I create an entire genre-spanning universe and set it in one suburban ranch house?" recalled Rodi. "As soon as I had the idea, I started giggling. I knew I was on to something."

While many Americans have yet to experience MoMo's unique visual stylings, CrossGen was well aware of his prolific work in European comics. Known for his versatility, MoMo was an obvious choice for a book in constant visual flux. Rodi couldn't be happier. "He's done some phenomenal character sketches," lauded Rodi. "There isn't a genre that throws him." ■ DH

NEW AUTHORITY British writers and comics Robbie Morrison and Frazer Irving (*2000 AD*) will team up for an all-new Authority one-shot titled *The Authority: Scorched Earth*. Shipping in November, *Scorched Earth* will find the team face to face with an otherworldly menace, and comics' most outrageous heroes may never be the same after the confrontation.



THE AUTHORITY: SCORCHED EARTH

TV TIMES THREE Avatar Press has locked up comic rights to the popular MGM properties "Stargate SG-1," "Poltergeist" and "Robocop," [illegible] for new books on all three in 2003.

THE POWER TO WRITE Powers artist Michael Avon Oeming [illegible] his hand at [illegible] writing for the first time on *Parliament of Justice*, a 56-page image [illegible] one-shot coming in March. The murder mystery set in the 1930s features ink-wash art by Neil Vokes.

BATTLE BOOKS In an effort to bolster its newly formed novel line, Top Cow will be releasing several books come 2003. So far a *Medal of Honor* and a *Battle of Planets* novel have been mentioned as primary candidates.

DREAM PAD Thanks to the incredible success of its *Transformers* comics and merchandise, Dreamwave is makin' on up. The upstart publisher's new cutting-edge crib is a pristine 9,000-square-foot studio complete with an arcade and gym.

MORALES MAKES HIS DC *Hawkman* artist Rags Morales is off the market for the foreseeable future—he recently signed an exclusive one-year contract with DC Comics.

NEW MARVEL PREZ Marvel Enterprises, Inc. announced in September that Peter Cuneo, president and CEO of the company since July 1999, will retire at the end of 2002 and be replaced as CEO by Allen Lipson, who has been Marvel's EVP [illegible] since November 1999. Cuneo will remain on the Marvel board after the transition period.

JUNGLE FEVER

Will Eisner roars with new 'Lion King' project

Even at 85, comic book legend Will Eisner still has new tricks up his sleeve. Best known for groundbreaking works such as *A Contract with God*, *To the Heart of the Storm* and *The Spirit*, Eisner's releasing a new 32-page graphic novel titled, *Sundiata: A Legend of Africa*.

SUNDIATA

According to Eisner, who's credited with creating such comic conventions as the splash page, the silent story and the graphic novel, his new project follows Sundiata, the first king of Mali.

"It's based on a legend of the origin of the African country of Mali," explained Eisner of the project that will be published by NBM Books in November. "The first king was Sundiata and I'm recounting how he rose to become the King of Mali."

Sundiata was unable to speak or walk as a boy. But he overcame those obstacles to face Sumanguru, an ambitious sorcerer endowed with the power to manipulate the elements, who's bent on conquering Sundiata's homeland.

While Eisner's usually associated with more urban tales, the creator said he enjoys this change of pace in storytelling.

"You've got to think of me as a guy who's never satisfied where he is," chuckled Eisner, who credits Bill Messner-Loebs (*The Maxx*) with helping him research the project. "I never want to just do what's expected." ■ MK

HEAT INDEX

No one loves comics like *Wizard*—here's some cool things we read and saw this month.

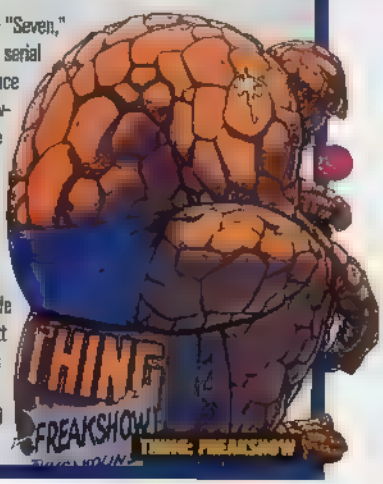
DC HEROCLIX (WizKids) First, WizKids blew fans away with *Marvel HeroClix: Infinity Challenge*, but now they've topped themselves with the first wave of miniature DC game pieces, entitled *DC HeroClix: Hypertime*. With *über*-powerful figures like Superman, the Golden Age Flash and Doomsday, alongside ultra-cool rare figures like Commissioner Gordon, Batman with Kryptonite gloves and Darkseid, this set's twice as powerful as the Marvel lineup and makes for one heluva Marvel vs. DC battle.

THE THING: FREAKSHOW (Marvel) The Fantastic Four's ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing's always been a favorite, but Geoff Johns and Scott Kolins' *Thing* mini-series has made Ben Grimm into a leading man all his own. By mixing FF lore with some really eerie scenery, Johns and Kolins have made the Thing look and act like the hero we always knew he was.

STAR WARS: EMPIRE #1 (Dark Horse) Finally, an ongoing Star Wars series that focuses on Darth Vader! Villains make for more interesting leads, simply because their motivations are more mysterious and dramatic. Let's face it: Darth Vader's one of the most recognizable characters in pop culture today, it's about time he got his own book!

SKINWALKERS (Oni Press) If you're a fan of flicks like "Seven," this spooky, atmospheric mystery series is up your alley. A serial killer who skins his victims alive and adopts their appearance runs rampant on a Navajo Reservation, and it's up to a maverick tribal cop and a by-the-book FBI agent to uncover the killer's identity…by getting under his skin! Yuck!

FANTASTIC FOUR #60 (Marvel)—This 9-cent gem by Mark Waid and Mike Wieringo captures what makes the FF great. The focus on how dysfunctional the FF can be came off naturally. Things like Johnny's breakup woes, Sue's grace under pressure and Thing's curmudgeonly 'tude (we laughed out loud at Thing and Johnny's "Davy Crockett dilemma") all felt dead-on. And the climax with Reed's deep, dark secret added a new layer to how heroic the Marvel U.'s smartest man really is. Bottom line, issue #60 clearly shines as the best *FF* issue we've read since 1986.



THING: FREAKSHOW

IMAGE'S NEW STAFF Paul Grist's critically acclaimed title *Jack Staff* is coming stateside courtesy of Image Comics. Originally released in black and white through Grist's own Gaming Brilliant Press, the series will be relaunched in full color in January 2003.

CROSSGEN SIZE CHANGES CrossGen Comics announced its [illegible] that will [illegible] upcoming volumes of the Compendia series starting with [illegible] and *Edge* #4, both available in December. The compendia will now be printed on [illegible] 5.5/16" format, approximately 192 pages, and be priced at $7.95.

TOP SHELF AND THE COLDF Chris Staros, president and publisher of Top Shelf Productions, has joined the Board of Directors of the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund. Along with the likes of Neil Gaiman and Jeanette Kitaen, [illegible] will serve on the board of the [illegible] defend the First Amendment rights of the comic book industry.

OUT OF TIME [illegible] Marvel's [illegible] meets the '80s with *Time Bandits*. Find out in DC's new *Manhunter*. Written by Howard Chaykin with art by Jo[illegible] Barrera, *Manhunter* follows [illegible] Kate Spencer [illegible] Debuting this November.

HERE COME DA JUDGE Behemoths, watch your step, because North America will soon be in Judge Dredd's jurisdiction. Dreamwave [illegible] scheduled to produce comics based on *2000 AD* [illegible] starting [illegible] with a never-published [illegible] Dan Abnett's career and [illegible] (*StormWatch*) with a writer to be announced.

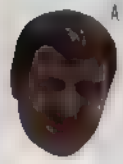
THE BRITISH INVASION

THE NEXT WAVE OF BRITISH SUPERSTARS

Where's Paul Revere when you need him?

One minute us Yanks are sitting pretty on top of the comic biz, and the next thing you know there's a new crop of creators from across the pond taking over books ranging from *The Authority* to (gasp!) *Captain America*!

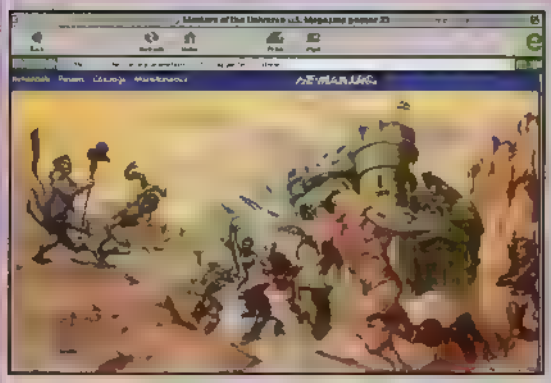
However, it's not undeserved. Seeing as many of the industry's top creators hail from the UK, it's no wonder that guys like Mark Millar and Bryan Hitch have inspired other like-minded creators to follow suit. Armed with innovate art styles and unique stories to tell, it's also no surprise that Marvel and DC have taken notice of this new crop of UK talent. So who are among the next wave of UK superstars? Read on and find out.

NAME	WHAT HE'S DONE	WHAT'S NEXT	WHY HE'LL BE BIG
Trev Hairsine	Penciler on *ClaSSwar* (Com.X Comics) and *Judge Dredd Magazine*	Hairsine will pencil an upcoming arc on *Captain America* entitled "The Extremists," which will run through issues #7-#11. Rumor has it he's also in negotiations with the House of Ideas to pencil a few other big-name series	Hairsine's ultra-realistic pencils, second only to Bryan Hitch and jaw-dropping action sequences in books like *ClaSSwar* should prove to be a perfect fit for Marvel titles like *Cap*
Robbie Morrison 	Writer for *2000 AD*, as well as the graphic novel *White Death* A1/Planet Lar,	Morrison will supply the script for the upcoming *Authority: Scorched Earth* one shot along with fellow *2000 AD* alumni penciler Frazer Irving.	Morrison's dark and foreboding writing showcased in *White Death* could be the breath of fresh air that *The Authority* needs. Rumors are still circulating that he may even be the writer when the series revamps early next year.
Ben Oliver	Penciler on *Puncture* (Com.X) and *2000 AD*	Oliver co-pencils *Primal*, shipping early next year based on the upcoming PS2 video game, with fellow Com.X up-and-comer Josh Middleton. There are also rumors that Oliver may be attached to a top-secret project for WildStorm.	Giving new meaning to the term gritty art, Oliver has been heralded as the next "artist's artist," in terms of upcoming talent. In fact, a piece he did for last year's *Wizard: EDGE* special, which featured WildStorm staple Grifter, caught Jim Lee's eye and inspired the WildStorm president to line up Oliver for a future project.
Andy Diggle	Editor and writer for *2000 AD*	Following in the footsteps of the many British writers before him, Diggle will pen December's *Lady Constantine* for DC/Vertigo, a *Hellblazer* spinoff starring an ancestor of John Constantine.	A former editor at *2000 AD*, Diggle's over-the-top writing style, which made *Jenny Zero* (a story which appeared in *2000 AD*) a cult smash in the UK, should be a welcome addition to the Vertigo stable of books.
Rob Williams	Writer of *ClaSSwar*	Sources at Marvel say that Williams has been pegged to write an undisclosed Marvel project that may see stands sometime in early 2003.	If *ClaSSwar* is any indication, Williams just may be the next Mark Millar in terms of tell-no-solid stories where anything can happen. Not to mention, Williams has a solid grasp on the American lifestyle which translates perfectly in his work.

d·t.comics

COOL COMICS RELATED STUFF ON THE INTERNET

SITE OF THE MONTH



HE-MAN.ORG

www.he-man.org

What's a retro revival without He-Man and his Masters of the Universe pals? Image may be set to release a brand-new comic this month and the Cartoon Network will be putting the new cartoon into heavy rotation, but this Website has been devoted to the denizens of Eternia for...well, an eternity. It's got comprehensive guides to the original cartoon show, past comic series and, of course, the toys. There are even sections dedicated to posters, magazines and the terrible live-action film with Dolph Lundgren.

NOVEMBER

1 "Spider-Man," the highest-grossing superhero movie of all time, debuts on DVD today! Loads of extras, including deleted scenes, documentaries, interviews and screen tests. Official movie site: **www.spiderman.sonypictures.com**

6 If you haven't yet already, catch the newest comic-inspired TV series, "Birds of Prey," tonight and every Wednesday night on the WB (check local listings). Cool fan site: **www.gothamclocktower.com**

12 Oh, joyous day! Both "Star Wars: Episode II–Attack of the Clones" (**www.starwars.com**) and "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring–Extended Edition" (**www.lordoftherings.net**) are out on DVD today!

13 *Daredevil: The Target* #1 (Marvel Knights). Kevin Smith (read the Q&A on **page 48**) returns to the Man Without Fear in this four-issue mini-series featuring covers and artwork by Glenn Fabry (*Preacher*). Smith's gossip site: **www.moviepoopshoot.com**

20 Other than today being a comics shipping day, we looked for an excuse to plug Marvel E-I-C Joe Quesada's new Website, which boasts a cool art gallery, transcripts of past interviews and even a message board where you can communicate with the man himself. **www.joequesada.com**

28 Happy Thanksgiving! Give thanks for all the cool DVDs and comics you picked up this month! Cooking tips: **www.thanksgiving recipe.com**

GUILTY PLEASURE OF THE MONTH

www.twentysix.net/saber

Works of Prey Courtesy of DC. Illustration by Jack Gray

DO THE BATUSI

In comics, nothing is sacred. Characters die, heroes go bad and worlds get blown up. But rarely, if ever, have comic characters ventured into the world of showtunes...until now. It was recently announced that Warner Bros. was pursuing a Batman-based musical with Tim Burton attached as a potential producer. Without missing a beat, *Wizard* decided to take a sneak peek how this boffo box-office smash could shake down when the curtain goes up. Break a leg, Batman. Or somebody else's. ■ **TOM ROOT**

INCINERATED

(Sung to the tune of Avril Lavigne's "Complicated")

Chill out
Whatcha screaming for?
Oh wait
You're burning on the floor
There's no time, the Joker's on the run
So chin up, chum

My fault
The Joker had a bomb
Don't twitch
It's best to remain calm
I'm such a lousy foster dad
That wound looks pretty bad

The fans hated you, Robin number two
You were caught in the blast, the fans said "at last"
You're charred and you're black, why won't Dick come back to me?
Tell me

Why'd you have to go and get yourself incinerated?
The readers voted for your death 'cause Jason Todd was overrated
Life's like this you
You fall and you fry and you burn and you die so
Promise me DC is never gonna resurrect you
No no no

You thought
You could wear the tights
You thought
You could fight the fights
But no, you fell into the Joker's trap
You're such a sap

You choked
When you met our foes
Now you're
Melted to your clothes
Oh well, you took the fall
Guess I'll give Tim Drake a call

The fans hated you, Robin number two
You were caught in the blast, the fans said "at last"
You're charred and you're black, why won't Dick come back to me?
Tell me

Why'd you have to go and get yourself incinerated?
The readers voted for your death 'cause Jason Todd was overrated
Life's like this you
You fall and you fry and you burn and you die so
Promise me Jim Starlin's never gonna resurrect you
No no no

'THE CALL' TO FULL-TIME DUTY

A hero's work is never done.

New York's best and bravest do overtime this April in an ongoing *The Call* series from writer Chuck Austen.

Over the last year, Marvel has chronicled the extraordinary heroism of ordinary people in three *Call of Duty* mini-series. As the trio of series comes to an Earth-shattering conclusion, firefighters from *The Brotherhood*, police officers from *The Precinct* and EMTs from *The Wagon* must work together to unravel the message of a mysterious little girl.

MAKING DUTY Heroism takes to the streets full time next April with an ongoing *The Call* series by Chuck Austen.

While an artist for the series has yet to be set, Austen is already hard at work on the first 12-issue storyarc. *The Call* will be much like the preceding mini-series, following the day-to-day lives of each series' main characters. That is, until they realize a little girl is trying to warn them of another attack on New York.

"The father of the little girl is trying to get them information by sending his daughter back through time," explained Austen. "It's up in the air as to whether or not he got enough information through to them."

The heroes struggle to learn more about the attack, hoping to avert another catastrophe before it's too late.

Even though the book will primarily focus on a select group of characters, the extended casts from each of the mini-series will continue to appear and play an important role in *The Call*. The integrated nature of emergency workers lends itself well to condensing three separate casts into one. "Real firefighters, cops, EMTs cross paths everyday," reminded Austen. "This book's no different." ■ DM

EMINEM VS. MIRACLEMAN

Who's everbody's favorite disgruntled blond mired in controversy and sporting an ill fitting spandex costume? On one side are the comic fans who chant Miracleman, and on the other are rap enthusiasts screaming for bad boy Eminem. A close comparison of the two blond, bad boys reveals some striking similarities. Will the real Slim Shady please stand up?

EMINEM	vs	MIRACLEMAN
Darkest fantasy involves murdering his estranged wife Kim Mathers		Darkest fantasy involves murdering his estranged sidekick Kid Miracleman
Has the power to star in the upcoming film "8 Mile"		Has the power to blow up an eight-mile radius
Initials MM Marshall Mathers		Initials MM. Mickey Moran
Dresses up in an elaborate superhero costume for his video "Without Me"		Dresses up in an elaborate superhero costume that leaves him asking, "Why Me?"
His wannabe sidekick Stan goes nuts and kills his girlfriend and breaks his neck driving off a bridge		His wannabe sidekick Kid Miracleman goes nuts, destroys much of London before Miracleman breaks his neck
Is the pet project of Dr. Dre, a rap impresario with mad skills		Claimed to have been the pet project of Doctor Gargunza, a mad scientist
Based his costume on Robin's		Was based on Superman and the Captain Marvel family
Wasn't supposed to get custody of his spawn Hailey Jay		Wasn't supposed to appear in the pages of *HellSpawn*
Asks kids if they like violence		Is violent towards Kid Miracleman
Bought by millions of angry Americans		Bought for millions by one angry Canadian
Viewed as one of gay community's greatest jerks		Viewed as one of Neil Gaiman's greatest works

Eminem: Everett Collection

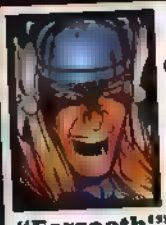
LAST MAN STANDING

comic battles you never thought you'd see

THOR VS. CAPTAIN MARVEL

THE COMBATANTS

TALE OF THE TAPE



6'6"	HEIGHT	6'2"
640lbs	WEIGHT	212lbs
78"	REACH	74"
Norse	PANTHEON	Greek
"Forsooth!"	ANNOYING CATCHPHRASE	"Holy Moley!"

Origins... The son of the lord of the Norse gods, Odin, and the Earth goddess Jord, Thor grew to become the mightiest warrior in fabled Asgard, acting as the realm's main protector and God of Thunder!

When orphaned Billy Batson wandered into a deserted subway station, the great wizard Shazam granted him the abilities of seven legendary figures which Billy uses to fight evil as Captain Marvel!

The battle... Traversing across dimensions using his enchanted hammer Mjolnir, Thor stops at the Rock of Eternity, but when Captain Marvel comes to welcome him, Thor mistakes his actions for an attack...and the battle is on! Thor fires the first salvo, hurling Mjolnir and catching Marvel square in the chest. Watching as the hammer returns to Thor, Marvel's wisdom of Solomon infers that Mjolnir possess mystical enchantments. Using the speed of Mercury, Marvel races back to the fray and unleashes a mighty punch knocking Thor into the Rock and bloodying his face! Using Mjolnir, Thor opens a space warp that bombards Marvel with a face full of blazing cosmic energy. Protected by the power of Zeus, Marvel swoops in once again, unleashing a thousand mighty blows in the blink of an eye that send Thor to the brink of unconsciousness. Calling upon his godly reserve, Thor again hurls Mjolnir straight at Marvel's center mass—only this time, Marvel plucks the mallet right out of the air! "How can thou be worthy to wield Mjolnir?" asks a stunned Thunder God. "Because I'm backed by the power of an entire pantheon!" boasts Marvel, who hurls the hammer back at Thor. But Mjolnir returns safely to its owner's hand thanks to its enchantments, and the Thunder God tries one last tactic. Using the mallet, he calls forth a mighty lightning bolt to strike Marvel ..and inadvertently summons the mystical lightning from the Rock of Eternity that triggers Marvel's transformation from Billy Batson, rendering the young boy unconscious ..and defeated!

this month's battle drawn by MARC MORALES

Sweatin' to the

Marvel's 1970s-era exercise tips may have

$3.95
Stan Lee presents:
THE MIGHTY MARVEL COMICS
STRENGTH AND FITNESS BOOK
MY SPIDER SENSE TELLS ME NOT TO OVERDO!
HULK NO DUMBBELL... HULK WORK OUT WITH DUMBBELL!
THIS CAN'T COMPARE WITH THE PU...NG MY HAIR USUALLY GETS!

Go on, admit it. When you were just a lil' hell raiser knee-high to your pappy, you convinced the folks to shell out for a dumbbell set, hoping that careful adherence to a structured exercise regimen would have you leaning more toward Lou Ferrigno than Bill Bixby in the physique department. Those were the salad days.

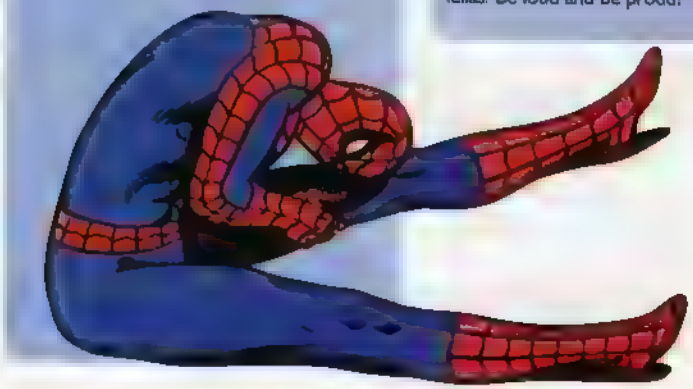
Rewind back to 1976. "Star Wars" had yet to hit. David Cassidy was making us swoon. And in homes across the country, millions watched in horror as a peanut farmer became president of the United States.

But this wasn't nearly as horrifying as what we've unearthed. Thanks to *Wizard*'s crack research staff, poking around in the darkest corners of the collective human basement (i.e. online auctions), we've just become privy to *The Mighty Marvel Comics Strength and Fitness Book* (left), a real, honest-to-God tome that purports to utilize beefy slabs of Marvel muscle to illustrate the dos and don'ts of body sculpting.

But with all apologies to author Ann Picardo and artist Joe Gielta, this is stuff that would make Richard Simmons blush, and the whole thing damn near winds up being Marvel's take on the *Kama Sutra*. As Alvin Robert Mintz (allegedly an M.D.) so tactfully notes in his foreword: "Fat people, heed and take notice!" The book is whack.

Note: These are actual images lifted from the Strength and Fitness Book. We didn't make these up—we swear!

MARVEL'S LINE: Spider-Man offers up tips on strengthening your abdominal wall.
WIZARD'S TAKE: Before you rush to judgment here, let's remember a few things. First of all, Parker has always had the most rotten luck with women. Second, the guy works hard and can unwind any way he wants to. Third, don't act like you've never tried it.

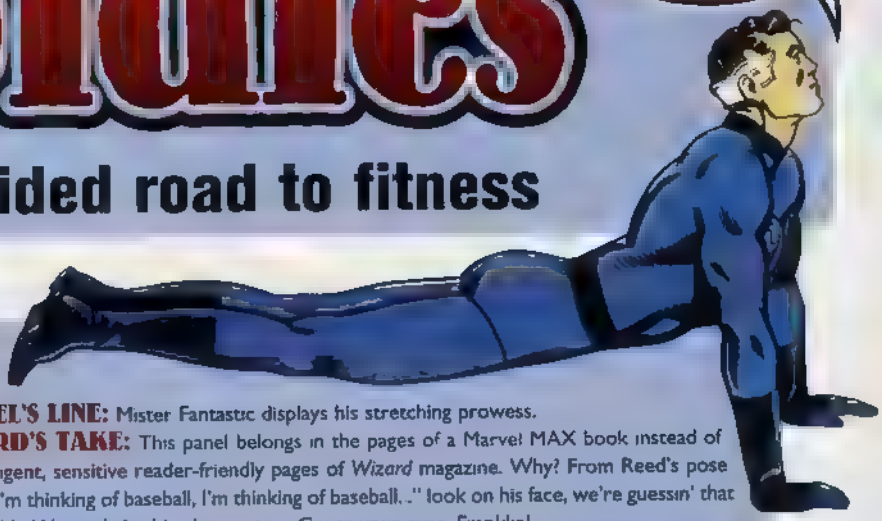


MARVEL'S LINE: Captain America and the Falcon assist each other in deep-knee bends.
WIZARD'S TAKE: Clearly, Cap is wary of the Falcon's advances, but isn't refuting them altogether. The true patriot that he is, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is in full force. Just let your feelings take over, fellas. Be loud and be proud!

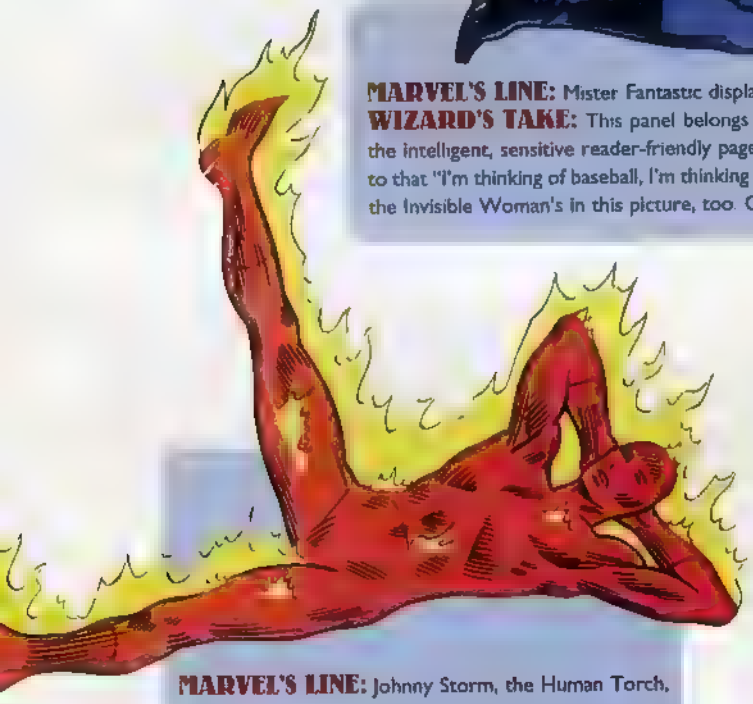
Moldies

been a misguided road to fitness

By Jake Rossen



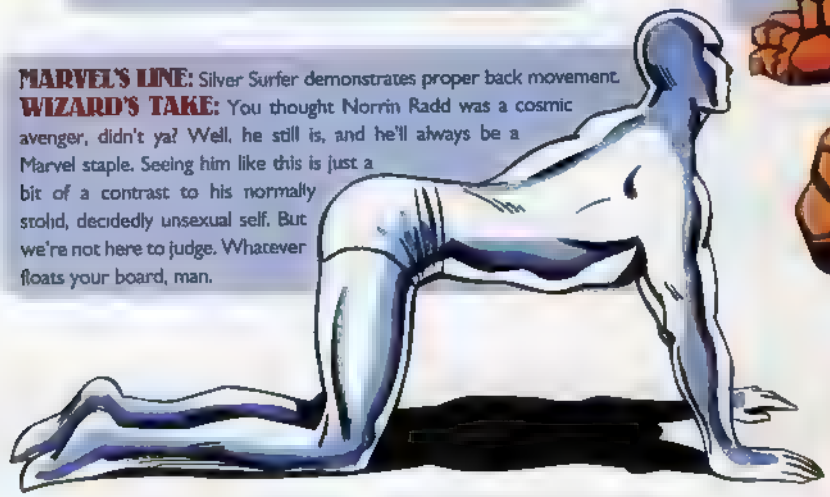
MARVEL'S LINE: Mister Fantastic displays his stretching prowess.
WIZARD'S TAKE: This panel belongs in the pages of a Marvel MAX book instead of the intelligent, sensitive reader-friendly pages of *Wizard* magazine. Why? From Reed's pose to that "I'm thinking of baseball, I'm thinking of baseball..." look on his face, we're guessin' that the Invisible Woman's in this picture, too. Cover your eyes, Franklin!



MARVEL'S LINE: Johnny Storm, the Human Torch, provides instruction for leg raises.
WIZARD'S TAKE: Imagine, for a moment, that this book falls in the hands of some kid who not only can't read, but has no conception of the Torch. To him, laying flat on your back and lifting your leg up is Marvel's recommended solution in case you ever find yourself on fire.

MARVEL'S LINE: Ben Grimm, The Thing, offers tips on toning your thigh muscles.
WIZARD'S TAKE: Ain't he a dainty little Thing? Here we see Grimm portraying the first of many poses from a Bettie Page tribute book. Grimm fought for equal opportunity, and thanks to the sissification of our culture, he got it! Now we want the scene where you're tied to an ottoman and whipped, Gimmy!

MARVEL'S LINE: Silver Surfer demonstrates proper back movement.
WIZARD'S TAKE: You thought Norrin Radd was a cosmic avenger, didn't ya? Well, he still is, and he'll always be a Marvel staple. Seeing him like this is just a bit of a contrast to his normally stolid, decidedly unsexual self. But we're not here to judge. Whatever floats your board, man.

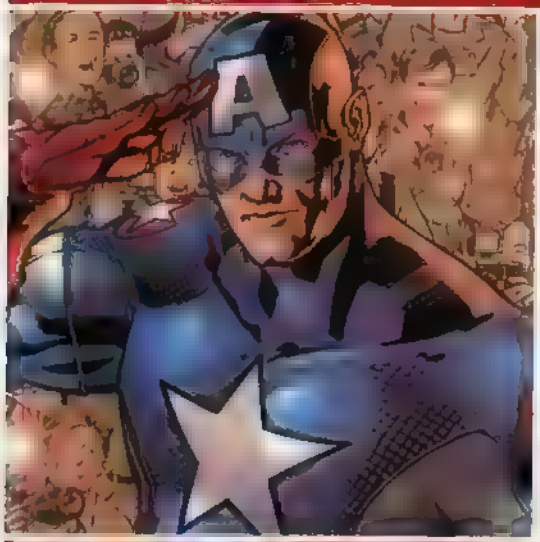


New York-based free-
and has vowed never to exercise again

WAR AND PIECES

Brace yourselves for titanic tussles and shocking showdowns between Marvel's two Ultimate superteams in this exclusive WIZARD preview

By James McDonough



WHO DO YOU TRUST? When Wolverine and the X-Men apparently join Magneto, Cap's Ultimates must hunt 'em down.

'Tis the season to be jolly, but fans expecting good will toward men—or mutants for that matter—will be in for the ultimate surprise.

This December, readers finally get to see who's the baddest superteam on the Ultimate block when the Ultimates (a.k.a. the Ultimate Avengers) and the Ultimate X-Men collide in the highly anticipated, four-issue limited series, *The Ultimate War*. Magneto has returned, offering the people of Earth an ultimatum: Surrender or die. It's now up to the Ultimates to meet this threat head on and take it down hard and fast. Unfortunately, they'll have to get through the Ultimate X-Men—who've apparently joined forces with their former enemy—before they get a shot at the Master of Magnetism. This marks the first-ever crossover in the Ultimate line and its creators promise a slight departure from what fans are accustomed to seeing.

"This isn't your grandfather's crossover here," declares writer Mark Millar, who also pens the respective books for each super team. "This isn't two teams who have a meaningless fight and then team up to fight the bad guy. I think it's pretty safe to say we've done something very different here. Captain America facing off against Wolverine is going to be very, very bloody indeed."

Editor Ralph Macchio promises something else, too. "The teams will be different as a result of this crossover," he teases. "There are going to be some big things happening in this crossover that will have reverberations throughout the entire [Ultimate] line [of books]. And since it's part of this universe, I'll be speaking with [writer] Brian Bendis to make sure those ramifications will be felt in *Ultimate Spider-Man* as well."

But if you're expecting more crossovers, look elsewhere. "This is the only time I plan to write something like this," insists Millar. "Crossovers, by and large, are just an indication that nobody's interested in your individual product anymore. Like those old bands who have to tour with 10 other bands just to make anyone buy a ticket. The Ultimate line lives in the top 10 [best-selling books], so this shouldn't be necessary."

Super-psyched about the project, artist Chris Bachalo (*Generation X, Ultimate X-Men*) can't wait to take on another big-screen style, superhero adventure with one of his favorite writers. "The decision to take this assignment was so easy," he attests. "Millar knows how to push all the right buttons to make a story interesting. I could probably draw stick figures and it would still be great, because the writing is so tight."

Turn to the next page and see the earth-shattering events as they unfold in this exclusive *Wizard* preview of *The Ultimates Versus Ultimate X-Men: The Ultimate War*. Things start off on a seemingly quiet morning in the Big Apple. . .

Stan Lee presents
THE ULTIMATES
VS
ULTIMATE X-MEN
story Mark Millar
pencils Chris Bachalo
inks Tim Townsend
Paul Mounts
Chris Eliopoulos
C.B. Cebulski
Brian Smith
Ralph Macchio
Joe Quesada
Bill Jemas
Brooklyn Bridge, New York:

So what's the *story?*
Some clown in an eighteen wheeler doesn't lock his *load* down tight and now it's scattered all over the *lane.*
Cops are up there trying to sort out the *mess,* but they're saying it looks like everybody's gonna have to get *backed up* off the *bridge* again, pops
Aw, *c'mon.* That's gonna put another *two hours* on the trip, dude. We got an appointment with our *wholesaler* at nine fifteen
Tell me about it, man. I got twenty-eight deliveries to make by *ten-thirty* this morning. You know what happens if I miss ten thirty *three times* in a *row?*
Hey, hey, hey. No *crying* now, honey. No *crying.* Mommy'll see if she's got one of *your* tapes here. You wanna listen to *Barney* or something?

What the --?
Oh my God.

Times Square:
Do not be afraid. Evolution is merely taking place. Just as man replaced ape, so now must you give way to your evolutionary masters.
As you can see, I am still alive. As you can see, nothing has changed except the urgency of the mutant agenda.
We are not murderers, we are not terrorists and our attacks upon human decadence are far from evil.
The Brotherhood of Mutants is simply here to take our place at the top of nature's food chain
I will keep this message brief because I dislike speaking to you. It feels ridiculous, like conversing with a toad or a common earthworm.
Thus, my statement shall be clear and straightforward- - you have six calendar months to surrender your world to Homo Sapien Superior
During this time, we will prepare your new society and decide which of your races should be kept as slaves, which should be fuel, and which should be saved for our larder.

Magneto has spoken.
Washington D.C.
Okay, now I think somebody better explain to me why this lunatic was filed under D for Dead when he's very much A for Alive, boys and girls. Any suggestions?
WANNA SEE COMICS' TWO HOTTEST TEAMS COLLIDE? THEN PICK UP ULTIMATE WAR #1 ON DECEMBER 4TH!

TALE SPIN Kevin Smith says *Spider-Man/Black Cat* represents the first time he went back and revised a script for a second and third draft.

THE WIZARD Q&A:

kevin smith

BY JIM McLAUCHLIN

The fan-favorite filmmaker and comic scribe sounds off on Spider-Man's frustrating marriage, why he'll never direct a superhero flick, and what got censored by Marvel

He *says* he's a movie guy, but Kevin Smith lies. His desk tells the truth: Smith is a comic fan through and through.

Even though Smith sits in his Philadelphia production office of "Jersey Girl," his new film featuring big-time stars and real-life couple Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez, you'd be hard-pressed to find anything movie-related on his desk.

However, look closer and you'll find a full, black-and-white copy of Glenn Fabry's art to *Daredevil: The Target* #1, the new series by Smith which revisits his role as scribe on 1998's "Guardian Devil" storyline. There are numerous color proofs from an issue of *Spider-Man/Black Cat*, Smith's current comic work. There's even the head of Ben Affleck poised on one corner of the desk.

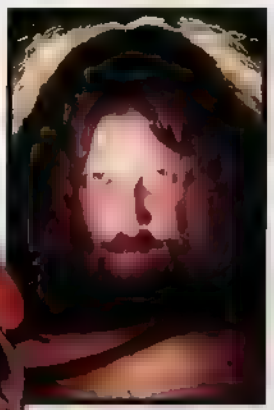
"Cut from God's own wood," Smith chuckles as he picks up a head sculpt that will be made into a Daredevil action figure, based on Affleck's movie version of the character. Smith himself, as a *Daredevil* writing alum, will have a bit part in the movie.

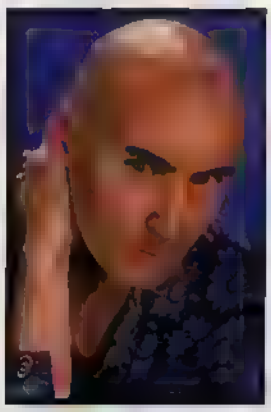
Nope, not much on the desk at all to tell you that Smith gained the fame that catapulted him into comics *from* movies. He's now written and directed six films, ranging from the raucous filth of 1994's "Clerks" to the touching romance-and-relationships comedy of 1997's "Chasing Amy" to 2001's geek-fest "Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back." Smith parlayed movie fame and a rabid audience that follows him *everywhere* to comics, where he's enjoyed huge sales, and now, the prized of prize plums—a gig writing *Amazing Spider-Man*, Marvel Comics' flagship title.

"This is the stuff that I grew up on, the stuff I really enjoyed reading when I was a kid. And now I get to *write* Spider-Man?" Smith says. "Fandom, man. I'm living it, on my desk and in my life."

"Morrison and Moore are beyond 10s, like 15s... I get the job done, but those guys are like unto gods."

—KEVIN SMITH





WRITERS' BLOC Despite his huge sales and rabid fans, Smith (top) says he doesn't come close to talents of Alan Moore (left) and Grant Morrison.

***WIZARD*: You look at this desk and you'd swear you're working on the "Daredevil" movie. And you're returning to your first Marvel gig with a new *Daredevil* mini-series [see sidebar page 54]. How do you feel about returning to that character?**

SMITH: We're going to have a bunch of people going "We're into [current *Daredevil* writer Brian Michael] Bendis' run, not yours." Comics are a gig that I love, but I'm the carpetbagger. The audience that reads comics every week is way into the current *Daredevil* run. I'll probably come up on the losing side of that.

DAREDEVIL FROM SMITH'S "GUARDIAN DEVIL"

You sound like you think of yourself as a weak comic book writer. Is that the case?

Kinda. If comic writing was the only thing I did, I could focus more attention on it. But it's not. Movies, the day job, gets the attention, and comics are something I enjoy doing when I'm not doing the day job.

But I do it because I love it, so there is definitely passion there. The spirit is always willing, but sometimes the flesh is weak because I don't have the time to plan out a story a year in advance.

Even *Spider-Man/Black Cat* is a story that I just kind of made up as I went along. I mean, I had a general idea of what would happen. But at the beginning of each issue, I was sitting there thinking "Okay, What now?" Most real comic writers know their sh-- well in advance, do the research, and crank it on out. For me it's more like, "Well, this works for me. I would enjoy this story. I guess I'll write it like this."

I think I've gotten better on *Spider-Man/Black Cat*. In the past, I've pretty much done only single drafts. I'll write it, hand it in and that's it. With this, I'll read it later on and want to change some things. This is the first book that I've actually gone back and done redrafts on while the book's in progress.

On-the-spot time: If you're a weak, but growing, comic writer, where are you on the proverbial 1 to 10 scale?

As a comic writer? A 7

Who's a 10?

Alan Moore. Grant Morrison. No, Morrison and Moore are beyond 10s, like 15s. I get the job done, and periodically I say something original or amusing. But those guys are like unto gods.

LEG WARMERS Spidey'll get much closer with the Cat in Smith's planned *Amazing Spider-Man* run.

sion of Charlie Brown. His villains are Lucy pulling the football away, except a bit more lethal. So with that in mind, it's kind of fun to write a Spider-Man story

And in the case of *Spider-Man/Black Cat*, the back-and-forth between them is stuff that I could write in my sleep. It's what I do in the day job—the relationship stuff. So that's *way* fun to write.

Do you know when you're gonna actually be writing *Amazing Spider-Man* full time?

Once I get clear of this flick [in November 2002], I'm going to head into *Amazing*. Early 2003? Something like that? The Black Cat is going to play a large role in our *Amazing* run, too

So is the notion of a Black Cat ongoing series still alive? Or...

No, we're folding that right into the *Amazing* run. She'll be a regular, main supporting character, which should prove interesting. On *Spider-Man/Black Cat*, I certainly didn't set out to write a very racy book, but there were some things editorial didn't like. This mandate came down from Marvel that all Spider-Man books are, like, PG or somesuch. And in #1, there was a splash page, the first full shot of the Black Cat in costume, with a line we had to change. The last panel on the previous page said something like, "If he's the mouse, then that makes me..." and you turn the page and it's a full shot of her as Black Cat with the internal dialogue, "the big pussy."

How about the aforementioned *Daredevil* writer, Mr. Bendis?

I like Bendis' stuff. I like *Powers*. I *really* liked *Fortune and Glory*. I didn't read *Ultimate Spider-Man* right away, but when I finally got around to reading the stuff, I enjoyed it. I don't think there's anything he's written that I haven't liked, and he writes a lot. On the 1 to 10, I'd say he's an 8 or a 9. He's good

How about your Spider-Man opposite number, J. Michael Straczynski?

I think me and JMS might be in the same place. He's a 7, maybe an 8. And we're guys that, as [Spider-Man Group Editor] Axel Alonso says, "You guys put asses in seats. You could write a *terrible* book and it would still sell." Thankfully, Axel tells us we both write good books. But the beauty of being me or JMS is that the pressure is off, sales-wise. Yes, primarily comics should be art and it should be all about telling a really strong story. But ultimately, nobody gives a sh-- if your sales suck—you're off the book or you're canceled. Sales are a big part of the equation. Thankfully, that burden is kind of lifted off our shoulders by virtue of the fact that I guess we bring an audience in from outside comics. And then you get to tell the story you really *want*, not necessarily the story that you *have* to tell for sales' sake.

You've got just a taste of Spidey so far. What have you learned in that taste? What makes for a good Spider-Man story?

Peter Parker, to me, is just an older, less bald ver-

[*Laughs*] That's a good double entendre.

Great double entendre. But a little too intense for a Spider-Man book. So that started a discussion with [Marvel Editor-in-Chief] Joe Quesada where he said, "Look, in Spider-Man, we've got to keep it relatively clean." I was

MARRIAGE BROKER Smith says one of his frustrations writing Spider-Man will be juggling Mary Jane and Peter's complex relationship.

like, "Dude, to me, that *is* relatively clean." It's a chick in a cat costume saying "big pussy." But Quesada said, "Well, kids pick up these books." And that's an argument you're never gonna win.

[*Pauses*] Writing Spider-Man at this point, there are a lot of daunting tasks. Particularly, the marriage situation is that Peter Parker is married to Mary Jane. But again, the mandate that's come down from the head office at Marvel is that he is no longer married, but we can't let them get divorced. [*Laughs*] Man, I don't understand.

"Peter Parker, to me, is just an older, less bald version of Charlie Brown. His villains are Lucy pulling the football away, except a bit more lethal."

-KEVIN SMITH

That sounds like a conundrum.

Well, you can't have Spider-Man get divorced because the movie made $400 million, and divorce is bad. And you can't have those two *married*, because the movie made $400 million, and everyone who saw the movie knows that those two aren't married yet. You can't do anything.

You know, I read that there were people up in arms because supposedly I had taken away the resolution of the Mary Jane story from J. Michael Straczynski. But I *didn't* take it away. It was something that Joe and Axel asked me to handle: "You do relationship stuff, why don't you handle the Mary Jane thing in *Amazing*?" But there is *nothing* I would love better than to not handle that. Please! Give it to JMS! Are you kidding me? I don't wanna f---in' deal with the headache of trying to write for a married couple who is no longer married, but yet, they're not divorced. I mean, that's insanity, man.

You've done some stuff with DC, and now you're exclusive with Marvel. Any desire to work with other publishers? Top Cow? CrossGen?

Not really. The stuff that I'm interested in doing is the superhero stuff. I gotta get my fix, and I *don't* want to do it in the movies. Far too difficult. I have been asked to do comic book movies. Have no interest.

Why not?

I loved being on [director Mark Steven Johnson's] set for "Daredevil," and sometimes I'd sit there and think, "Yeaaaah...it *would* be fun to do one of these." But I watched poor Mark slowly go gray over the course of that shoot, dealing with all the action sequences, which takes soooo long... It's fun to watch, but I wouldn't want to be in charge of that kind of thing. It's just too much of a pain in the ass. I'm a big fan of having a scene complete by the end of a shoot day, so I can go cut it the next day if I want to. When shooting an action movie, sometimes you have to wait a week, *two weeks* before a scene is complete 'cause you're shooting all this single-frame action. Takes forever.

Marvel has three movies coming out next year: "Daredevil," "Hulk," and "X-Men 2." What are you most looking forward to?

For obvious reasons, "Daredevil."

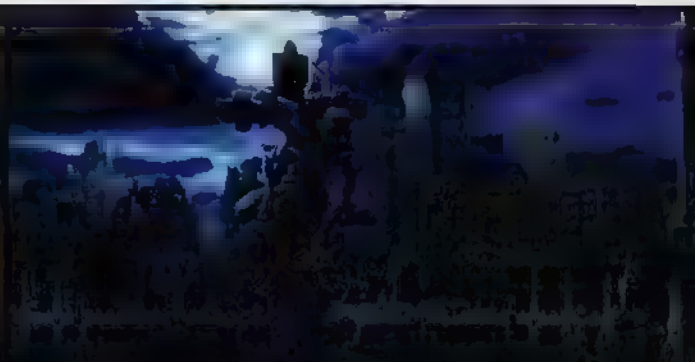
Obvious being, stroking your own ego and seeing yourself in your cameo role?

No, I am *dreading* that because I was much heavier when we shot that. I've lost 30 pounds since then, man.

No, I'm a big Affleck fan, so seeing him as Daredevil will of course be a big turn-on. And of course, I don't just love the character; I'm tied to the character. That's the one movie I *really* want to see out of those three.

Next would be "X-Men 2," because I really enjoyed "X-Men." But I've never really been a Hulk fan, never got into the character. Ang Lee is a great director, and

CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE? Despite Black Cat's sexy nature, [illegible]



DEVIL'S ADVOCATE Not only does Smith appear in the "Daredevil" movie (above), the storyline borrows concept imagery from his "Guardian Devil" storyline (right).

I'm sure he'll do something with it, but it's so low a priority with me, I'm not really that concerned with "Hulk."

Let's talk about your upcoming flick. Tell me about "Jersey Girl." What's the vibe on this? "Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back" was very informal. What's this one like?

This flick is a far cry from "Jay and Bob." It's closer in spirit to "Chasing Amy." A decent parallel for it might be "Terms of Endearment," a romance/drama with some very comedic elements in it. Plot is "Dude falls in love; it changes his life." It's not a hard-core comic fan's movie.

Do you have a preference between doing something goofier like "Jay and Bob" or something a little more serious like this?

It's six of one, half dozen of the other. This set on "Jersey Girl" has been good, but I wouldn't say it's the most madcap. The tone of the movie kind of dictates that as such. You never went to work on "Jay and Bob." It was like going to a party. I didn't direct that movie as much as *hosted* it.

Is it difficult having tabloid-fodder Jennifer Lopez, who graces the cover of the *National Enquirer* every week, in this movie?

You'd think it would be, but it hasn't been that intrusive. Initially we thought when Ben and Jen started dating, we wouldn't be able to get anything done because it would just be the whir and clicks of paparazzi, all trying to get a shot of them kissing. Somebody with a video camera shot some footage and sold it to like, "Access Hollywood" or "Extra" or something. You'd rather that not happen, but anytime they mention them, they mention "Jersey Girl," so I can't really complain too much.

If you could only do either movies or comic books, which would you choose?

I would pick films. It may very well be the greatest communication medium there is. You really have a chance to touch people's lives. A movie doesn't just play in the head and the heart. It goes deep into people's *soul* for some reason. "Chasing Amy" seems to have profoundly affected people—they tell me! It would be tough to give that up

But then you wouldn't get your "fix."

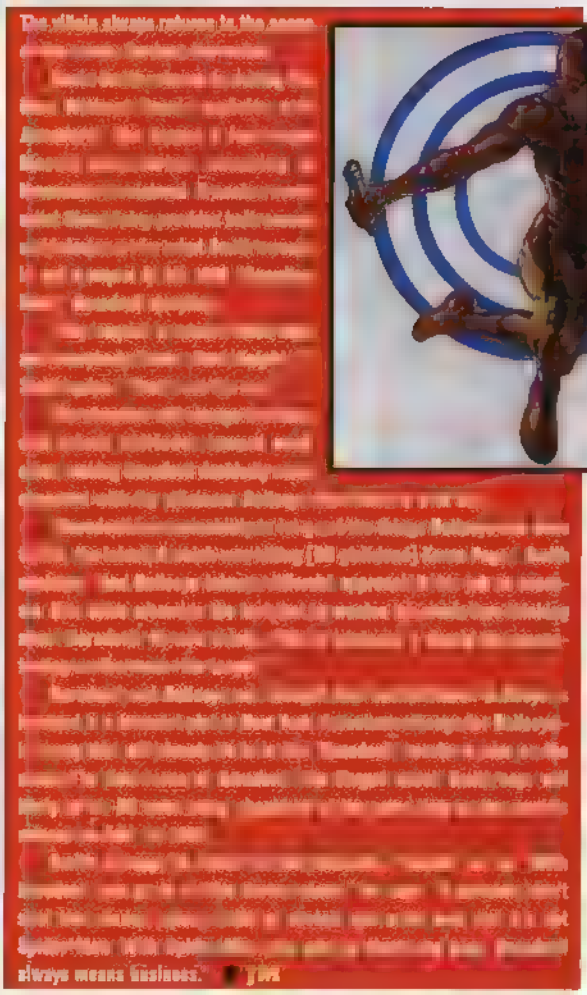
Well, then I just go back to being a fan, and quit wasting all the time I spend on the Internet reading people's reactions to the comics I write and become a far more productive member of society

As long as I can still *read* the comics, I'm good. I'm such a fan of the medium that the fact that I was even given the opportunity at all to do it myself has been great. It's been a fun ride. As long as I have stories to tell, I'll keep riding.

Contributing Editor Jim McLauchlin's idea of a "fun ride" involves a tire swing, three cans of Reddi-Whip and a girl named "Lisa."

KEVIN SMITH: ON TARGET

SMITH SINKS HIS TEETH BACK INTO DAREDEVIL



DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

WIZARD *gives fans an exclusive look at 'Daredevil' with over 20 all-new photos!*

Conquering crime lords, master assassins and ninja clans may be easy for Daredevil, but the Man Without Fear's next opponent could be his toughest—Hollywood.

Luckily for Matt Murdock, he's got director Mark Steven Johnson ("Simon Birch") on his side come February 14, 2003, when 20th Century Fox's big screen "Daredevil" hits theaters. According to Johnson, making a "Daredevil" movie's been a dream of his for years and that's why he incorporated tons of comic book reference into his onscreen adaptation.

"[Making a 'Daredevil' film] is something I've wanted to do since I was 12 years old," admits Johnson. "It's pretty much an obsession with me. It's a great, kickass superhero movie, and at the same time, it has heart."

And at the heart of the "Daredevil" film are stars Ben Affleck ("Sum of All Fears") as Daredevil, Jennifer Garner (TV's "Alias") as DD's deadly girlfriend Elektra, Michael Clarke Duncan ("The Scorpion King") as the Kingpin of crime and Colin Farrell ("Minority Report") as the fierce assassin Bullseye.

Affleck says after signing on for "Daredevil," he and Johnson both wanted the film to be as close to the comic book world the hero originates from as possible, and they've taken great pains in making sure "Daredevil" the film will please fans of *Daredevil* the comic book.

"It was my favorite comic book since I was a kid, since I was an adolescent of maybe 13, 14 years old," says Affleck, who wrote the introduction to Kevin Smith and Joe Quesada's *Daredevil: Guardian Devil* trade paperback. "I feel like I've read every *Daredevil* comic ever written. What I use as a barometer is, 'Would this fit in the *Daredevil* comics I remember?'"

With attention to detail like that, Johnson, Affleck and the rest of the cast have to be doing it right, right? Well, don't take their word for it. Check out the next few pages for your first look at over 20 all-new, exclusive "Daredevil" movie photos and judge for yourself.

BY MIKE COTTON AND JIM McLAUCHLIN

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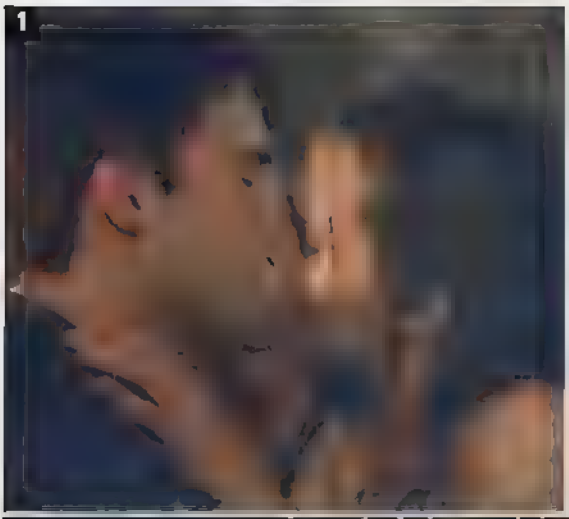


1 Much like in the comic books, Matt Murdock and Elektra fall madly in love, but the Kingpin and Bullseye threaten to end their relationship just as it's blossoming.

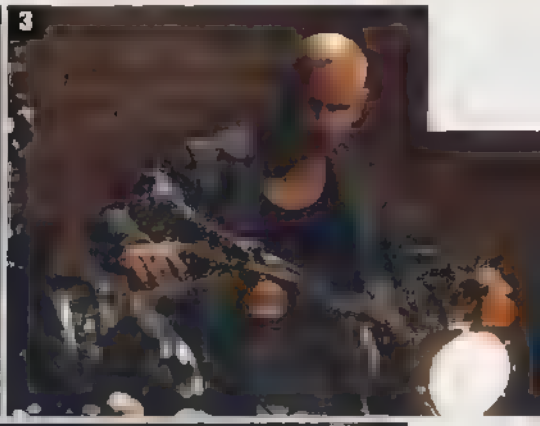
2 Johnson happily admits that his "Daredevil" is heavily influenced by the works of Frank Miller among others. DD will wreak some havoc in Josie's Bar (seen here), a lowlife hangout from Miller's storied run.

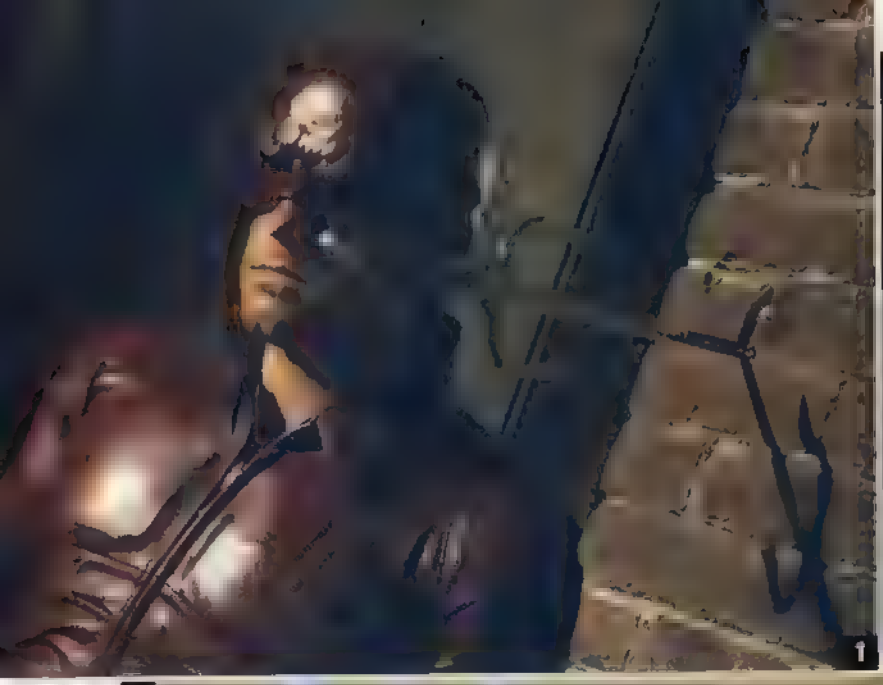
3 "The idea of having Colin play this punk-attitude Bullseye character—which to me is always kind of Sid Vicious meets Alex from 'A Clockwork Orange'—is exciting," says Johnson. "Bullseye should be one of the great villains that you actually end up liking."

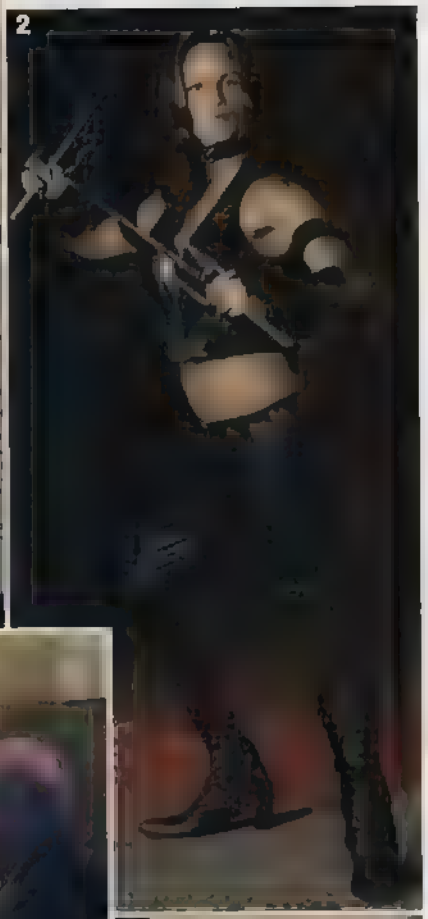
4 Fans can expect to see Daredevil's classic origin retold in the "Daredevil" film, including scenes of a young Matt Murdock with his boxer father Jack "The Devil" Murdock, whose influence and murder lead to Matt becoming a costumed crimefighter. Matt will also use elements of Jack's boxing togs in crafting his first costume.

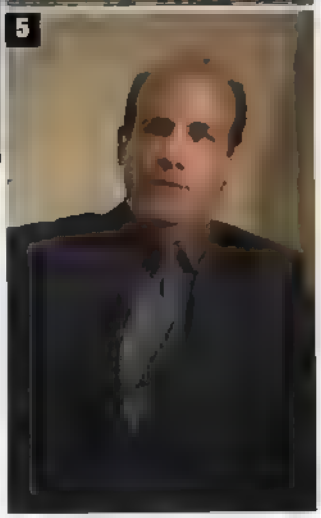
5 Expect to see Elektra and Daredevil's relationship change over the course of the movie and even look for some glimpses at how they first met in college courtesy of flashback sequences.

6 Much like the Daredevil comics, the death of young Matt Murdock's father is a turning point in the character's life, leading Matt to use his super senses to eventually fight crime as a costumed vigilante.









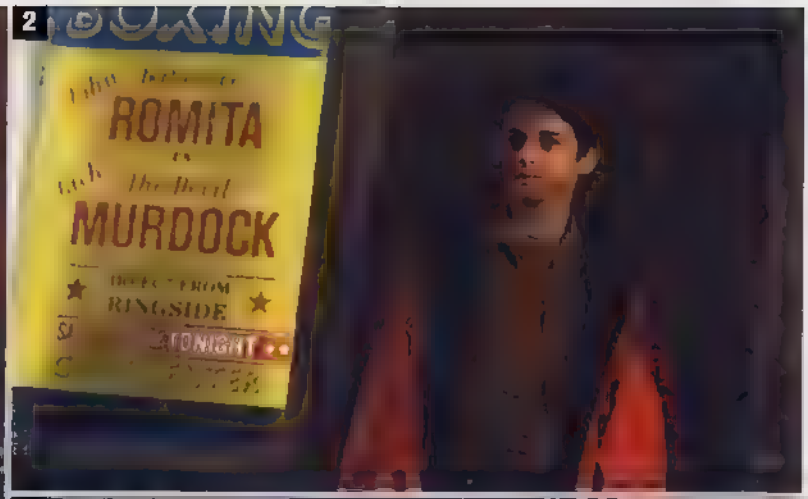
1 While trying to stay true to the Daredevil costume design from the comic book, the "Daredevil" movie team made some small tweaks to DD's classic duds. According to Johnson, James Acheson, who also designed the Spider-Man costume for the webhead's big screen debut, did a phenomenal job of blending a real world look with the feel of a comic book inspired costume.

2 Johnson says fans shouldn't be disappointed in not seeing Elektra in her classic red fighting outfit, and he has a good reason for not using it. "Elektra hasn't turned into an assassin yet–it's more of an origin story for her," explains the director. "I wanted her costume to be one that would enable her to make that transition from Elektra Natchios into Elektra: Assassin."

3 The Kingpin's office is a ritzy glass-and-chrome showplace befitting a rich and powerful criminal overlord. In this scene, the Kingpin meets with Elektra's father, Nikolas Natchios (played by Erick Avesl), a legitimate businessman who's looking to sell his holdings and retire.

4A-4B Garner and Affleck worked for weeks on fight choreography for "Daredevil," but according to the leading man, his leading lady continuously kicked his ass. "Mark showed me about 20 movies he wanted this to 'look like,'" claims Affleck. "A heavy influence was anime. Jennifer's better at this than I am [when it comes to the fight scenes]. She shames me every day."

5 Heavily influenced by Kevin Smith and Joe Quesada's run on the Man Without Fear, Johnson signed Smith up for a cameo playing a coroner named after Daredevil co-creator Jack Kirby and named this character Joe Quesada to honor the current Marvel editor-in-chief.



1 In re-envisioning Bullseye's costume, Johnson and the costume team did away with the assassin's classic garb in place of a long duster and a "bullseye" scar on the villain's head instead of a mask. Reportedly, there's a big secret regarding Bullseye's scar, so look for a major revelation.

2 Expect to see lots of references to classic *Daredevil* artists and writers in the film. Much like in this scene, where Johnson pays tribute to early DD artist John Romita, the film is filled with tips of the hat to the creators who've worked on DD over the years. "It's nice to see," Romita says of his "cameo." "I have the same hopes and dreams for this movie as I did for 'Spider-Man.' I think Daredevil is the best character we have at Marvel."

3 When looking for an actress to fill the role for Elektra, Johnson needed someone both gorgeous and capable of pulling off the tough role. "Jennifer is just *so* beautiful, and *such* a great actress," gushes Johnson. "We met a lot of beautiful, good actresses. But what we really needed was a *great* actress, 'cause Elektra is a very, very complicated character. She's great Greek tragedy."

4 "Daredevil" promises to deliver a ton of action, including a street fight scene between DD and Bullseye, where the master assassin attempts to run the Man Without Fear over with his motorcycle.

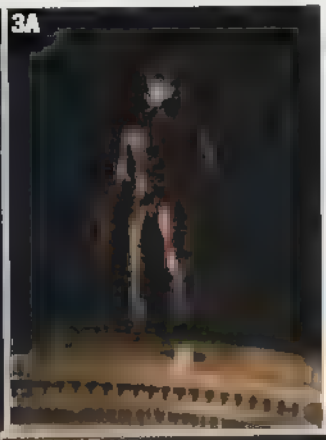
5 In the film, Daredevil has a trademark fiery double D he leaves to mark his territory in Hell's Kitchen.

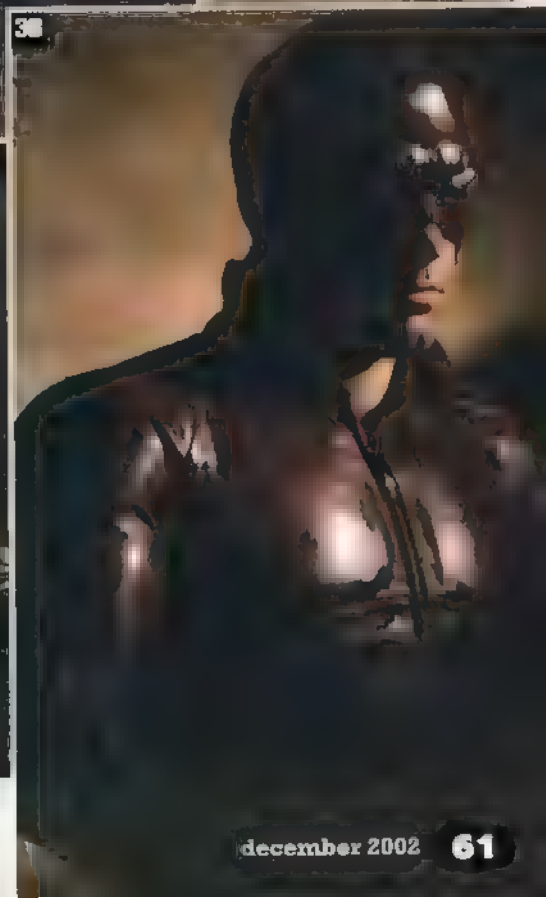
1 Not only would Johnson like to do a sequel to "Daredevil," but also an "Elektra" solo film. This tidbit may answer questions about whether or not the rookie assassin shares the same bloody fate she did in the comic when she faced Bullseye.

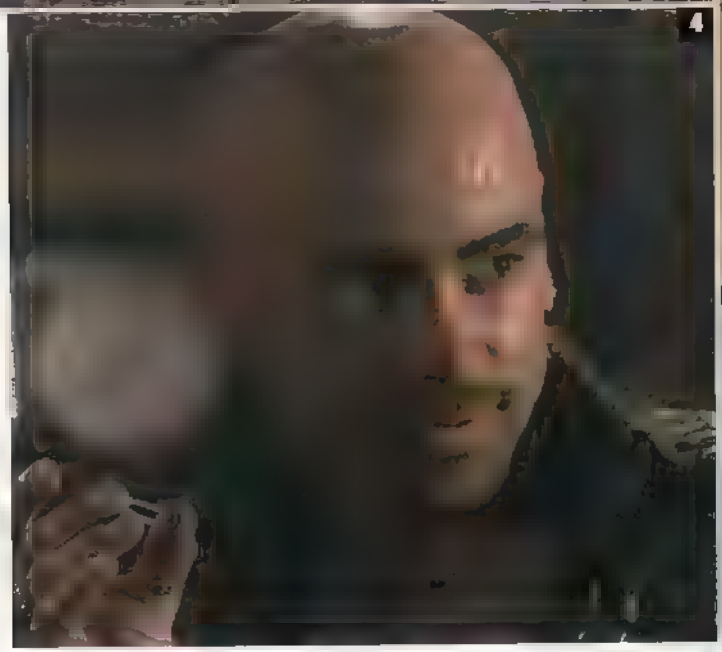
2 While Garner constantly trains for her extremely physical role on ABC's "Alias" every week, nothing prepared her for the grueling work on "DD." "Ben and I have been working on one fight for six weeks, three hours a day, every day."

3A-3B "James Acheson did a phenomenal job creating the Daredevil costume that both honors the comic and, at the same time, puts it in the real world," says Johnson. "The material has changed to leather to protect his body from injury. Daredevil isn't perfect, and even with his enhanced senses, he's still a blind man. So he's going to take his bumps along the way. The leather costume protects his body much like a motorcycle suit would."

4 According to Johnson, Colin Farrell's portrayal of the Kingpin's chief assassin Bullseye will be just as riveting as the character is in the comics. "Colin is one of the most exciting new actors working today," says Johnson. "It's great with Bullseye, 'cause you don't know his real name. No one's ever really for sure about him."







SEEING

EYE SPY Comic book fans have been keeping a close eye on the "Hulk" production, which was rumored to be plagued by difficulties.

GREEN

Take a tour behind the scenes of 2003's big-money summer blockbuster 'Hulk' movie, as WIZARD is the very first publication on set!

Birds sing in the trees and butterflies gently drift from flower to flower on a picture-perfect neighborhood in Berkeley, Calif. White picket fences surround quaint country-style houses on a street so all-American it would almost make Norman Rockwell sick.

Yet behind the door of a dark red, two-story house lurks a man with a heavy curse. He can break even the strongest of men with the wave of an arm or reduce civilized worlds to ruined battlefields. Naturally, his curse has caused him his share of problems, but right now, he isn't concerned with the possibility of inadvertently shattering worlds, or even the beautiful brunette sitting across from him...

He's mainly concerned with the heaping plate of Chinese take-out sitting across the room from him.

By Casey Seijas

"Cut," he says softly off camera, barely even audible to actors Eric Bana and Jennifer Connelly who sit only a few feet away. The soft-spoken voice belongs to none other than Ang Lee, the Oscar-nominated director of such films as "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," "The Ice Storm," and "Sense and Sensibility." But more importantly, he's currently the man responsible for bringing Marvel Comics' Incredible Hulk to life in what's sure to be 2003's summer blockbuster "Hulk." Ang Lee's curse? A meticulous nature to make sure everything's not just perfect, but *absolutely, positively perfect.*

While the crew readies for another take, Lee approaches Bana ("Black Hawk Down"), the relative newcomer who portrays Dr. Bruce Banner in "Hulk." With a no-nonsense look of determination, the acclaimed director begins to coach the star of the film on how he imagines Bruce Banner would scarf down a Chinese chicken wing.

"Eat more greedily," explains Lee, demonstrating with an imaginary chicken wing. As Bana takes in Lee's coaching, Connelly ("A Beautiful Mind"), the Academy Award winner who plays Banner's love interest Betty Ross, receives some last minute touch-ups on her makeup.

Lee then returns to his director's chair and the scene is reshot...then shot again...and again...and so on...

When it comes to a film like "Hulk"—with a budget that surpassed the $100 million mark just a few months after filming began—Lee refuses to cut corners, knowing it's the little details that make ordinary films into masterpieces. And if Lee puts this much effort into something as commonplace as eating a chicken wing, then fans should definitely be in for a treat when Universal Studios' and Marvel Films' "Hulk" hits theaters on June 20, 2003.

"It's been great working on 'Hulk,'" says Lee between takes. "Universal has given me an opportunity to be creative with the filming—they've made me feel like I'm back on the set of 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.'"

As night falls on the Universal Studios backlot neighborhood and Bana's eyes tear up at the thought of eating *another* chicken wing, Lee finally has what he needs and calls it a wrap for the day. Ever the professional, Lee warmly thanks the cast and crew for their efforts on another long day of filming. Yet despite the all-too-common 12-hour days, everyone involved seems well aware that they're not only filming another surefire Ang Lee masterpiece, but a dream come true for Hulk fans.

THE RUMOR MILL

Despite the announcement of Ang Lee as the director of the film, the addition of Oscar-winner Jennifer Connelly and a big budget, Hulk fans weren't always sold on this movie adaptation. With Universal and Marvel Films keeping story details highly confidential, comic Websites began looking to "Hulk" extras and crew members as sources for information, and fans soon became outraged at what they were hearing.

Rumors about filming, among which included a bickering cast and crew and a budget which had skyrocketed out of control (both of which Universal strongly denies), began flooding the Internet. However, the one rumor which infuriated fans the most would have to be the addition of "Hulk Dogs," a pack of CGI-animated dogs which had been infected with the same gamma rays that turn Bruce Banner into the Hulk. There were even reports of a "Hulk Poodle" popping up for a few months. While both Universal and Marvel Films have continued with their information embargo, they are quick to dispel at least two of these three rumors.

"We're currently only slightly above our initial budget, and the cast and crew are getting along great," mentions Marvel Films President Avi Arad. He made no comment about the use of "Hulk dogs."

Many fans also voiced opinions about who was chosen to portray Dr. Bruce Banner. Among their major concerns were fears that the muscular, 6'4" Bana wouldn't be able to pull off the scrawny, nerdy Banner character. Likewise, fans

"I THINK WE'VE ALL BEEN CAST FOR OUR ANGST ABILITIES. IT'S QUITE AN ANGST-RIDDEN SCRIPT."
–Eric Bana

were also concerned about Bana's star power, since he'd only been in one major release stateside, 2001's "Black Hawk Down." While his celebrity status will undoubtedly rise after "Hulk" hits theaters next summer—like Tobey Maguire's did following "Spider-Man"—Universal has assured fans that their wardrobe department will make the buff Bana look exactly like the bantam Banner they're used to seeing in the comics.

"I think we've all been cast for our angst abilities," explains Bana. "It's quite an angst-ridden script."

DREAMING ON SET

What's sure to be the first in a franchise, "Hulk" expands on what Stan Lee and Jack Kirby established for the Hulk's origin back in 1962.

"Hulk" is being filmed on four different stages around the Universal Pictures backlot. The first stage, Stage 27, houses a military-style testing complex. It's a massive set that includes a containment chamber, a very large and industrial-looking tank which will eventually be filled with water and be the setting in which Bruce Banner first transforms into the Hulk.

Stage 20 houses Banner's laboratory set. According to "Hulk" crew members, Ang Lee's wife, a biochemist herself, had a helping hand in developing this set and the cast's wardrobe during this scenes. She demanded that none of the cast wear white lab coats, as no biochemist does that anymore. The set blends the eeriness of a "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" setting with a typical high school chemistry classroom—lots of beakers and test tubes sit on tabletops, science class posters cover the walls, a large table is covered in half-filled jars and biology textbooks. Yet despite the sterile atmosphere, there's still that feeling of impending doom that is a 700-pound monster. Don't expect to see too many overt comic references here, besides nameplates on the doors reading "Dr. Bruce Banner" and "Dr. Betty Ross."

About a mile from the previous stages (yes, the Universal backlot is that big) sits Falls Lake, a historic landmark which is usually filled with water and previously served as the set for movies like "Jaws" and "The Truman Show." However, on this day, tons and tons of gray desert sand occupy the once water-filled set. Sitting in the middle of the now sand-filled Falls Lake is a half-built house which serves as Banner's boyhood home, only when he returns to it in "Hulk," it'll be the setting of a nightmare dream sequence.

The set designers took their time in making the Banner residence the dictionary definition of "squalor." Wallpaper peels off the wall exposing worn cinderblocks, cracked linoleum covers the floor; and it looks as though the floors and windows haven't been cleaned since, well, ever. "Hulk" crew refer to the set as the "Forced Perspective Set," which fits since, from the right angle inside the house, it appears as though you're looking out into a vast, Arizona desert, complete with dying cacti and an eerie, decrepit swing set.

In this dream sequence, Banner returns to his boyhood home in the Arizona desert, now in complete shambles, and is soon confronted by demons from his past—namely, his father, who will be played by Nick Nolte. Dream sequences and surrealism will play a big part in "Hulk," and Universal even hints that that pesky "Hulk Dog" rumor might actually take place in one such dream sequence.

KICKING ASS AND EATING CHINESE FOOD

The fourth set consists of a neighborhood street built specifically for "Hulk." It's a suburban Berkeley neighborhood, with four different country-style houses all painted in vibrant colors. Apparently, Lee drove around a neighborhood in Berkeley picking out homes he felt would work for "Hulk," then set designers built exact replicas of each house Lee picked out. "The "Hulk" crew actually called this set, "the set with no name."

Many of the crew sport "Hulk" hats with Chinese characters on the side, which roughly translate to "Kick ass," a sort

of rallying cry for the film's cast and crew. In the scene being filmed, Banner tries to explain the strange dreams he's been having lately—where he transforms into a mindless force of nature—to Betty Ross (Connelly) over a Chinese take-out dinner. It's a poignant scene, and Lee shoots several takes. In between each take, Lee coaches both of his stars on how to make the scene more realistic, whether it's Connelly's reaction to Banner's bizarre dreams or Bana's manner when eating his food. At the end of the scene, there's a knock at the door and the action stops. It's later revealed that General Thunderbolt Ross and a team of Secret Service agents will enter afterwards.

Lee is extremely particular about the minute details of his actors. A good percentage of scenes that were deemed "top secret" weren't necessarily pivotal plot points or elaborate battle sequences, but rather, highly emotional scenes in which Lee wanted one-on-one interaction with his actors with as little outside distraction as possible. In fact, several crew members weren't even permitted on set during these times.

Lee has also taken advantage of Universal's big budget to experiment with the filming. There were times when he would stop the cameras rolling and place them at unorthodox positions around the set, or play with lighting effects, just to see what they would look like. Universal hints that a majority of these "experiments" will probably make it into the final cut of the film.

Lee tweaks the camera positioning one last time just as Bana looks as though he's about to cough up the dozen or so chicken wings he's eaten. And with that, Bana is done for the day, and the Australian actor gives Lee a look that says he'll never eat another chicken wing again. As Bana makes his way off the shoot, he mentions that he hadn't been on set for two weeks prior, and had just got back from a quick trip to his homeland. This time however, he's also brought his family and they plan on seeing what L.A. has to offer.

Connelly on the other hand has a few more hours of shooting in front of her. Lee films the scene several more times, shooting from different angles, all of which focus on Connelly. Connelly doesn't mind the long hours, and freely admits that working with Lee is like a dream come true.

"Ang brought such a lyricism to movies like 'The Ice Storm' and 'Crouching Tiger,'" says Connelly. "I just wanted to be around him."

Approximately four hours after beginning this scene, Lee stops production at 9:00 p.m.

"[ANG] IS MAKING A MOVIE THAT'S TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM ANYTHING YOU'VE EVER SEEN."

UNDERWATER ACTION

Shooting begins promptly at 8 a.m. the next day, this time taking place on Stage 27, a.k.a. the Containment Unit set.

The containment unit is full of water this time, resembling the Bacta Tank Luke Skywalker was submerged in at the beginning of "Empire Strikes Back," and inside are two cameramen operating an underwater camera. Along with them is Bana's stuntman, Billy Morts, who's currently tied to the bottom of the tank with a large, industrial-looking scuba mask covering his entire face. Two large eyeholes, however, make it easy to see the top half of his face.

The cast and crew take on a "strictly business" attitude today, as this particular shoot will not only be time consuming, but quite possibly dangerous considering the film's star will be submerged in a tank of water for half the day. Test filming goes smoothly, and Lee and cinematographer Fred Elmes call Bana to the set.

Bana arrives soon afterwards in great spirits, wearing sandals, a white T-shirt and *purple* swim trunks. He chats with the crew, cracking jokes and talking about his family in a thick Australian accent. Once he sees stuntman Morts however, his beaming smile drops and he soon begins to realize that he's got a long day of filming ahead of him.

Knowing that the scene he's about to film will be the first time fans get to see the Hulk come to life on the big screen, Bana half-jokingly sighs, "I guess this is the moment we've all been waiting for." Morts walks past Bana and gives the star a look of half-hearted sympathy.

Bana hops into the containment unit with enthusiasm, hesitating only so his body can adjust to the cold water. After putting the mask on, which has a two-way radio so that he and Lee can communicate, the cameramen help tie him to the bottom of the tank. Just as Bana gets as comfortable as he's going to get, a problem arises. This particular shot calls for a head-on shot of Bana,

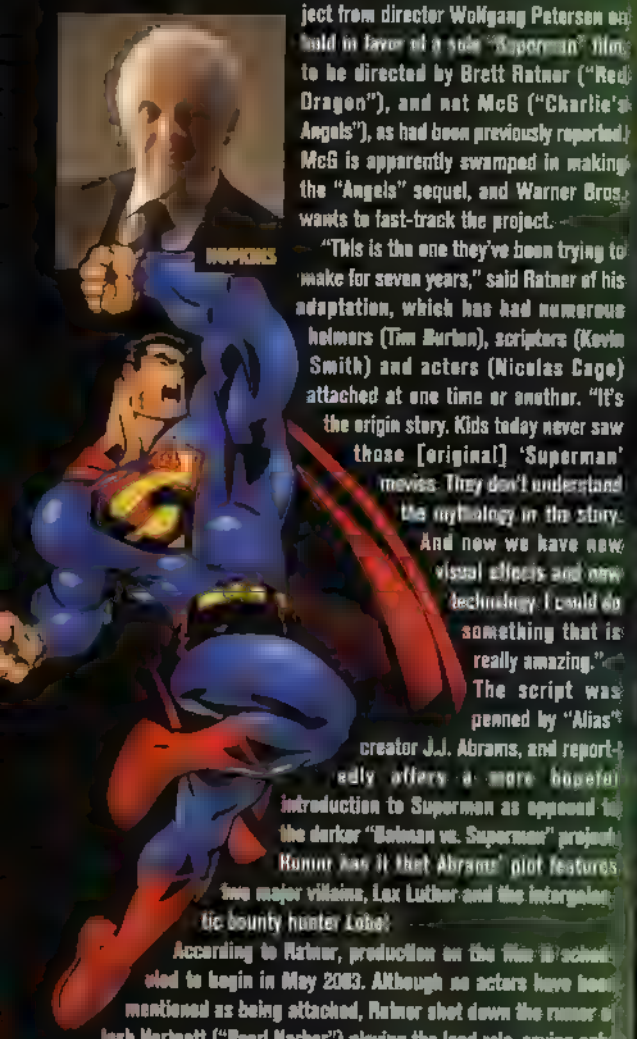
TRAILERS

The latest news, buzz and rumors about your favorite comic book movies and TV shows

MORE MOVIE MUSCLE

The Hulk may be ready to bust out, but DC's muscle man is pumping up to prove he's still the heavyweight champ.

Warner Bros. has apparently put its "Batman vs. Superman" project from director Wolfgang Petersen on hold in favor of a solo "Superman" film to be directed by Brett Ratner ("Red Dragon"), and not McG ("Charlie's Angels"), as had been previously reported. McG is apparently swamped in making the "Angels" sequel, and Warner Bros. wants to fast-track the project.



"This is the one they've been trying to make for seven years," said Ratner of his adaptation, which has had numerous helmers (Tim Burton), scripters (Kevin Smith) and actors (Nicolas Cage) attached at one time or another. "It's the origin story. Kids today never saw those [original] 'Superman' movies. They don't understand the mythology in the story. And now we have new visual effects and new technology. I could do something that is really amazing."

The script was penned by "Alias" creator J.J. Abrams, and reportedly offers a more hopeful introduction to Superman as opposed to the darker "Batman vs. Superman" project. Rumor has it that Abrams' plot features two major villains, Lex Luthor and the intergalactic bounty hunter Lobo.

According to Ratner, production on the film is scheduled to begin in May 2003. Although no actors have been mentioned as being attached, Ratner shot down the rumor of Josh Hartnett ("Pearl Harbor") playing the lead role, saying only, "I'd like to go with an unknown." It is rumored however that Ratner would like his "Red Dragon" star Anthony Hopkins to play the role of Superman's father, Jor-El. Hopkins was reportedly doing impressions of Marlon Brando, who played Jor-El in the 1978 version of "Superman," at a recent press junket with Ratner in attendance.

SHORT TAKES Michael Chabon, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, is reportedly writing a draft for the upcoming "Spider-Man" sequel, tentatively titled "The Amazing Spider-Man"...There's a fan crusade to get "Witchblade"—based on the hit comic from Top Cow—picked up at another network. Carrie Hultz, coordinator of the online petitioning at the Witchblade Central Station fansite, said over 3,700 signatures have already been collected. Fans who want to participate can go to http://www.witchbladecentralstation.com. **JENNY PETERS AND THE WIZARD STAFF**

with the camera pointing directly at his face. However, air bubbles from Bana's mask keep floating up and straight into the camera lens, some of which stick to it.

The shoot becomes all about timing, and the second an air bubble sticks to the lens, filming stops so the cameramen can wipe away the bubbles.

Once the snag is semi-remedied, Lee begins filming, coaching Bana on how he envisions Dr. Banner "Hulking out" (as Lee refers to it). "Nod your head slowly back and forth...good...now give me a slight twitch.. okay, another one...good, now a quick shake . again...now open your eyes...shake violently...you're angry now.. and...cut."

After a few takes, Lee gives Bana a much-deserved breath of real air out of the water. As Bana clings to the side of the containment unit, Lee begins to instruct Bana on how better to "Hulk out." Lee slowly begins to tremor, stretching his arms out to each side to closely resemble a cross between having a seizure and having just been "saved" by a television evangelist. Bana soaks it all in.

"I think Ang's just incredibly interested in making soulful pictures," says Bana. "He doesn't feel that there have been many superheroes that have had as much depth as he would like to lend them."

Bana re-enters the tank and the filming continues. The problem with the air bubbles persists, making the shoot very long and very frustrating for everyone involved.

Soon after, eight-time Academy Award winner Dennis Muren from Industrial Light & Magic stops by the set to film some background scenes which will be used for special effects (when Banner fully transforms into the Hulk). Bana sees this as an opportunity to sneak something to eat and get a few minutes rest in his trailer. Meanwhile, extras for the second shoot of the day mill around outside the set. They're dressed in military-style uniforms with the logo "Athena" emblazoned on their uniforms, possibly the company that captures the Hulk.

Thirty minutes later, Bana is called back to the set and, once again, finds himself strapped to the bottom of the tank.

By about noon, Lee is happy with what he has, and a waterlogged Bana happily makes his way out of the tank once and for all. Filming of the scene wraps and the cast and crew go to lunch.

HULK SMASHING SUCCESS?

As the cast and crew make their way to the cafeteria, stars mingle with the crew like they've known each other for years, and Bana once again returns to his jovial, joking self as he munches on a salad. If there is animosity among the cast and crew, they do a great job of hiding it.

"[Ang] is making a movie that's totally different from anything you've ever seen," explains Josh Lucas, who plays the film's main antagonist Major Glenn Talbott. "We have an extraordinary challenge because we have a director who's not going to let one moment go by that doesn't seem like you're actually watching a beast."

"This has obviously gone beyond my wildest dreams," says Bana. "Sam Elliot, Nick Nolte, Jennifer Connelly, Ang Lee—could you be surrounded by better people? It's great being the weakest link."

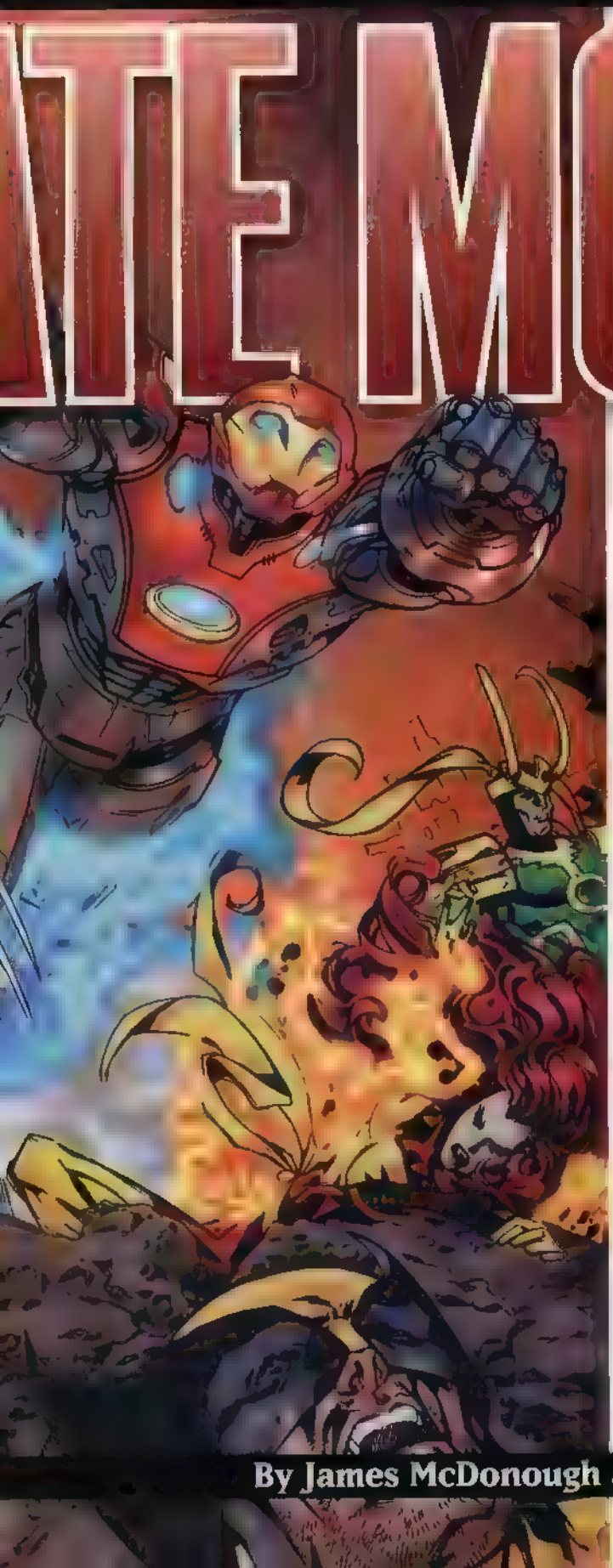
And with that, Bana smiles like a hot young rookie who just got signed by his favorite Major League Baseball team. It seems like the only thing that could sour the mood of the cast and crew at this point are bad reviews. Or in Bana's case, a plate of chicken wings.

Staff Writer Casey Seijas has such an all consuming love of chicken wings that when he began coaching Bana on how to eat one, Bana and Ang Lee both "Hulked out" and did things to Case that we'd really rather not write about.

Eric Bana © Jerome Hamilton/Corbis Outline; Hulk TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. © Susan Schneider/Corbis Outline; Jennifer Connelly © Paul Gregory/Corbis

THE ULTIMA
LASHLEY
MARIANO

...TE MOVE



Should it or shouldn't it? With controversy swirling, WIZARD lets loose the 10 reasons why Marvel should 'Ultimize' its entire universe.

BLASPHEMY!

Whether it's on the message boards, at convention panels or in your local comic shop, that's the response you'll likely get when comics' latest, most controversial debate surfaces: "Should Marvel replace its classic universe with the Ultimate universe?"

It all started in August when rumors leaked that the House of Ideas considered converting all of its titles to its ultra-successful Ultimate line, which reinterprets its classic heroes and rebuilds them from the ground up while remaining true to their roots. Some fans rejoiced at the thought. Others spewed venom at the merest hint.

"This 'Ultimate' stuff has all been done before," explains *Ultimate Spider-Man* scribe Brian Michael Bendis. "[Writer/artist] John Byrne did it with Superman [in 1986], it's been done to 'Star Trek,' even James Bond. These are 40-year-old franchises and every few years they have to wash their hands and start with something new."

Ultimate has become the hottest line in the industry, silencing naysayers with critical and commercial success. Not only has Marvel's Ultimate formula struck a chord with fans, it has also provided the blueprint for the future of comics.

Realizing a sure thing when we see it, we believe the publisher's next move is indeed "Ultimizing" the entire Marvel Universe. If an Ultimate update worked for the Avengers, Spidey and the X-Men, why can't it work for the rest of the classic Marvel U.? To prove our point, we broke our argument down into 10 reasons why it needs to be done. For our first proposal, the House of Ideas need look no further than its Distinguished Competition...

By James McDonough and the WIZARD Staff

10 IT'S BEEN DONE BEFORE DC's been there, done that. Way back in 1986, DC Comics was in a similar fix. After half a century, their heroes had grown stale and their universe convoluted. With the multiverse epic *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, DC streamlined its entire line, ushering in a series of unheard-of relaunches for its most popular heroes.

"I wouldn't have read DC comics if it weren't for *Crisis* [and the relaunches]," reveals *JSA* co-writer Geoff Johns. "It made a lot of their books really strong again. I became a DC guy because I started right on the heels of all those relaunches and #1s."

With *Crisis*' conclusion, big-name creators like John Byrne and George Pérez overhauled DC's icons with updated origins. The move proved so controversial that it created a media sensation, getting coverage from print, radio and television. Byrne's *Man of Steel* rebooted the Last Son of Krypton's entire history from square one. The mini-series starred a younger, less experienced Superman learning the ropes and confronting villains for the first time—basically an Ultimate Superman.

The book was a resounding success, and DC quickly followed suit with Frank Miller's *Batman: Year One* opus, where a rookie Dark Knight used terrorist tactics on criminals. Pérez re-established Wonder Woman as comics' premier heroine by imbuing her with a deep sense of Greek mythology

Considering there was no safety net via a "classic" companion series, DC's tremendous risk paid off big time. If DC had the stones to do it with the Man of Steel, what's to stop Marvel from giving it a shot?

9 THE TALENT POOL It takes A-list talent to create A-list comics. With a bold tag like "Ultimate," this line had better have it in spades!

Boasting big names like Brian Michael Bendis, Bryan Hitch and Mark Millar, the Ultimate line's credits read like a Dream Team roster.

But it doesn't stop there! Marvel has a veritable All-Star Team to draw from. With Geoff Johns (*Avengers*), Jeph Loeb (*Spider-Man: Blue*), Grant Morrison (*New X-Men*), Frank Quitely (*New X-Men*), Kevin Smith (*Spider-Man/Black Cat*) and J. Michael Straczynski (*Amazing Spider-Man*) on the payroll, Mighty Marvel has the tools to construct the Ultimate lineup. Just look at the reaction to JMS' work on Spider-Man or Morrison's new vision of the X-Men, and it's clear that creators of this caliber not only bring star power, but also infuse each project with originality and powerful storytelling.

"Only something good can come out of [the hottest talent working together]," enthuses Ultimate line Editor Ralph Macchio. "You just want to see how they intermix. It's great to sit back and watch them go."

The bottom line? Keep the best and forget the rest. When it comes to the Ultimate line, anything else just won't cut it.

8 LESS EQUALS MORE Better yet, quality versus quantity. With countless X-books, spin-offs and mini-series, the comic industry's motto during the early '90s was "the more the merrier." These days, Ultimate Marvel realizes the virtues of streamlining.

"We're not interested in events, just good, honest storytelling," says Bendis. "We're not into the multi-issue gimmicks. Compare [the Ultimate line] to DC's 40,000 Batman crossovers; it really is a different experience."

Instead of inundating readers with tons of comics, the Ultimate line focuses on fewer titles with higher quality. This way, a glut of mediocre books doesn't overwhelm fans.

To fill the void left by the cancelled ongoings, take a nod from the success of recent mini-series like *Daredevil: Yellow* and *Banner*. Marvel won't have to commit to ongoings, but rather have its major-league creators tell strong stories in a finite forum. Mini-series will satisfy hungry fans and translate into big bucks.

Remember, too many cooks in the kitchen can dilute the soup. In an ever-expanding comic universe that prides itself on ease of entry, fewer books make it easier to avoid the continuity glitches that have plagued Marvel's universe.

7 C'MON IN You won't need a written invitation. Without decades of continuity and ongoing storylines, the Ultimate books provide the perfect pool for new readers to dive right in.

Fans can enjoy characters and stories without being bogged down with unresolved subplots, confusing cameos and

WINGS BE GONE With the total star power Marvel has–like *Ultimates*' Bryan Hitch (whose Cap is shown here)–an all-Ultimate line would be the coolest universe around.

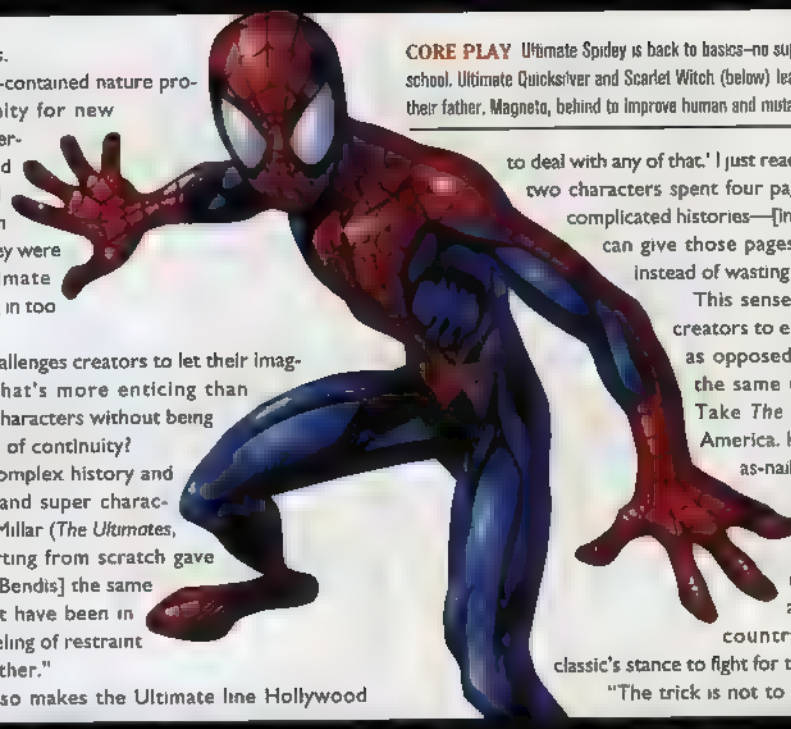
meaningless crossovers.

Also, the books' self-contained nature provides ample opportunity for new readers, who may be overwhelmed by a world whose inhabitants and concepts have been in existence since before they were born, to test the Ultimate waters without investing in too many issues.

Similarly, the line challenges creators to let their imaginations run wild. What's more enticing than working on legendary characters without being mired by 40-plus years of continuity?

"I found Marvel's complex history and three-and-a-half-thousand super characters daunting," reveals Millar (*The Ultimates*, *Ultimate X-Men*). "Starting from scratch gave me and Brian [Michael Bendis] the same excitement there must have been in 1962. There was no feeling of restraint when putting this together."

The open invite also makes the Ultimate line Hollywood friendly. Its wide-screen storyarcs make the line an even stronger candidate for adaptations to film and other media. It's no secret that hits like "Spider-Man" and "X-Men" tapped into the Ultimate formula. Get the picture?



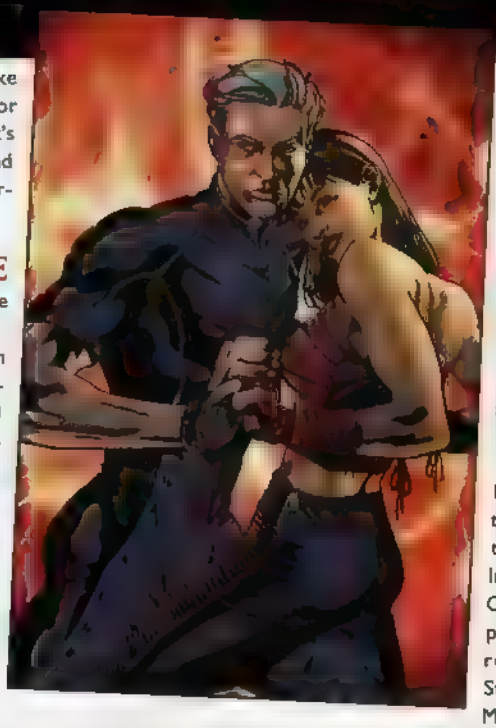
CORE PLAY Ultimate Spidey is back to basics–no supermodel wife or teaching school. Ultimate Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch (below) leave the terrorist beliefs of their father, Magneto, behind to improve human and mutant relations in *Ultimates*.

to deal with any of that.' I just read an old comic where two characters spent four pages reiterating their complicated histories—[in an Ultimate book,] I can give those pages to build things up instead of wasting it on recap."

This sense of freedom allows creators to explore new avenues as opposed to traveling down the same uninspired streets. Take *The Ultimates*' Captain America. He remains a tough-as-nails super-soldier, only the Ultimate version works for the government and resolves to sacrifice anything for his country, rather than the classic's stance to fight for the American Dream. "The trick is not to stray away from the original concept," explains Millar. "The Ultimate line was designed to remind us about the strong concepts which have carried these characters for four decades. It's like slimming down a fat chick."

"The Ultimate line was designed to remind us about the strong concepts which have carried these characters for four decades. It's like slimming down a fat chick."

—Mark Millar



6 CUTS TO THE CORE

Cap-wolf? Spider-Clones? What the hell was Marvel thinking?

No longer forced to contend with watered-down, soap-opera ties and conceptual blunders, creators can boil characters down to their essence, focusing on what makes them stand the test of time.

Ultimate Spidey's a neurotic teen trying to balance his newfound powers and social insecurities, not a teacher/photographer/ex-widower. Bendis has also taken the normally foppish Doc Ock and transformed him into a vengeful genius left physically scarred by the accident that created him.

"Keep it boiled down to the essence and focus on storytelling," advises Bendis. "I think the ['classic'] Spider-Man books are doing a great job, but every time I read one I go, 'Thank God I don't have

5 21st-CENTURY COMICS

Perception goes a long way. With its slick visual style and edgy attitude, the Ultimate books command a Britney Spears-level of sex appeal that easily make them the hippest line out there.

Gone are the cheesy mustaches, buccaneer boots and wrestling trunks. The characters that inhabit the Ultimate universe actually look like they stepped out of this century. Check out Ultimate Wolvie's soul patch, Jean Grey's Pink-inspired punk rocker 'do, or better yet, Gwen Stacy's pierced navel and hip huggers. Meowrr!

Our heroes' costumes are no longer garish and cumbersome. Their "business" outfits appear darker and resemble practical jumpsuits. It's this real-world feel that gives these characters the hipster

MTV INVADES MARVEL Ultimate characters (like Gwen Stacy and the X-Men) have been given stylish, contemporary makeovers.

edge needed to attract a younger audience raised on *Metal Gear Solid* and "The Matrix."

"Outside of these stories taking place in a 'real-world' environment, when you read *Avengers*, you're confronted with eight characters going on an adventure," says Marvel Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada. "But with *The Ultimates*, it focuses on one character at a time. You very rarely get all five characters in a room at once. It's more like a [contemporary] TV ensemble than a TV team show."

Adding to the eye-candy factor are the line's high production values. All titles feature card-stock covers, slick paper and cutting-edge computer coloring for the industry standard price of $2.25, thus giving fans even more visual bang for their buck.

4 KEEPING IT REAL

Just ask Jay-Z: keeping it real goes beyond just looking the part.

What made the original Marvel Universe so great were its multidimensional characters. Not only were they powerful heroes, but they also had problems we could all identify with. Taking this formula to the next level, Ultimate characters display as many flaws as they do virtues. For example, The Ultimates' Tony Stark needs a couple of martinis before he gets up the nerve to risk his life as Iron Man.

"I think of these guys as people as opposed to icons," attests Millar. "That's what Stan Lee did when he created the flawed hero back in the '60s. Who wants to read about perfection?"

There are realistic repercussions to these superheroic antics as well, such as the lawsuit brought against Charles Xavier by Iceman's parents after their son suffers a near-fatal injury battling Proteus.

Finally, there's a method to all this superhero madness. No longer are the Avengers a bunch of superpowered yahoos beating the crud out of bad guys for the greater good. Instead, The Ultimates are a government-sanctioned superhuman defense team.

3 THEY'RE HALFWAY THERE ALREADY

Even the classics read fresher these days. Cap snaps a terrorist's neck to end his reign of terror. Bruce Banner is on the run from the government, which eyes him as the next stage in biological warfare. Badass Luke Cage swaggers through New York's slums sportin' headphones and caught in the middle of a gang war.

By taking chances with classic titles like *Captain America*, *Daredevil*, *Incredible Hulk* and *New X-Men* over the past year, Marvel has experienced tremendous success, once again making their titles major players in the Top 50.

Similar to the Ultimate titles, these books are in favor of more realistic, character-driven stories.

"*Daredevil*'s already an Ultimate book; the first move was to put in the recap page to instill that sense of a new beginning," laughs Bendis. "With the first year of *Ultimate Spider-Man*, I began to see the reaction to my philosophies of focusing on the storytelling and not the baggage."

Even series like *Cage* and *X-Statix* (the recently relaunched *X-Force*) turn preconceived notions of what those characters should be on their ears to receive acclaim as the hippest titles out there. With the way these books are heading, with a few

minor tweaks they would meld seamlessly within the framework of the Ultimate universe

2 ULTIMATE CASH FLOW Printing Ultimate books is like printing money. Slap an Ultimate label on your book and it's virtually guaranteed to sell a gazillion copies!

Just sneak a peek at the Top 10 sellers, which typically boasts all three Ultimate titles as mainstays.

As for *Ultimate Adventures*...okay, you got us. It didn't exactly burn up the charts. But remember: That title was converted into an Ultimate book as part of a media stunt (the "U-Decide" fan poll). It failed to adhere to the Ultimate formula—it didn't star a recognized Marvel character, nor did it headline big-name talent. In our eyes, it's not really an Ultimate title.

"A new audience and a new beginning for Marvel kicked off with the Ultimate line," declares Millar. "The sales back this up every month. These books consistently live in the Top 10."

The sales mentality has already been transferred to Marvel merchandise. Stroll into your favorite department store and look at the plethora of Ultimate merchandise. There's everything from Ultimate Spider-Man beach balls to Ultimate Hulk die-cast cars. Toy Biz has even begun to differentiate with the "Marvel Legends" line, which only features classic versions of characters like Captain America, Hulk and Iron Man.

Apparently, even Marvel's licensing department knows a good bet when it sees it.

I BECAUSE BENDIS AND MILLAR SAID SO "I can't say it out loud," admits Bendis, "but my ego—and I think I can speak on behalf of Mark Millar's ego, which is quite larger than my own—says that it would be fun."

Millar agrees. "In the entertainment business, long-running franchises can often alienate a wider, mainstream audience," he says. "Warner Bros. realized this and went back to basics for Superman with 'Smallville.' Hopefully, we're producing a line anyone can pick up and understand without a handbook."

Now, before you get your panties in a bunch, relax. Comics are fiction. These characters and events never really happened, and a relaunch doesn't mean these tales will be erased forever.

"Those comics never went away," asserts Millar. "They're still in trade paperbacks, they're still in your hearts and they're still in my bloody cupboard. The Ultimate line doesn't eradicate their existence. It's just a new life beyond it."

"*Rom: Spaceknight* will still exist," jokes Bendis. "It's not like 'Back to the Future,' where they look back to a photo and all their comics will be gone."

With an entire Ultimate Marvel universe, the only thing making a disappearing act will be the trend of a shrinking comic audience.

Wizard Staff Writer James McDonough thinks reasons #11 and #12 are Gwen Stacy

FOUR

PLAY

by Andy Serwin

Hardcore comic fans already know it—now you can discover the FOUR BEST BUZZ BOOKS TODAY

If you're willing to do some digging, you're sure to strike a vein of hidden gems on Diamond's Top 100 list.

Once you get past the '80s revivals, the Ultimate line, the Spider-titles and the X-stuff, there are still some pretty damn good books to be had. They may not be the best sellers, but they offer up some of the best reads in comics. In fact, we've sifted through the flotsam and jetsam of the Top 100 and uncovered four titles that we feel should be on your required reading list.

These titles run the full gamut of genres, from true-to-life espionage (*Queen & Country*) to hard-boiled crime fiction (*Alias*) to far-flung, alternate reality-spanning superhero action (*Exiles*).

After reading each of these books, you'll find yourself getting that buzz in the back of your head—you know, that high you get after reading a total kick-ass story, where you just can't wait to talk about it with your friends? That's a feeling even some creators still can't shake.

"[*Queen & Country* writer] Greg Rucka and I talk about that all the time," describes *Alias* writer Brian Michael Bendis. "Fans get so totally into the journey. It's very intangible, but I crave that feeling when I read a great book. I still get that all the time. And I crave creating that feeling for other people."

So if you're looking to fix that comic book buzz of your own, let's start by polishing our first of four hidden gems. For that, we have to start with the end of mankind.

Y—THE LAST MAN

Three billion women plus Earth's last man add up to nightmarish arithmetic in DC/Vertigo's latest series

Y—The Last Man hits you like a kick in the groin, which is appropriate considering its premise: In issue #1, every male mammal on Earth drops dead.

DC/Vertigo's latest mature readers hit stars aspiring escape artist Yorick Brown and his helper monkey Ampersand, the only two male creatures on Earth who have seemingly escaped a mysterious malady that horrifically wipes out every creature with a Y chromosome. It's up to these two he-men to help repopulate the planet—if they can survive the roving bands of violent lesbians and femi-Nazis, the various scientific groups jockeying for a cure and assorted espionage threats both foreign and domestic.

"This whole premise spun out of being a nerdy comic fan growing up in Cleveland," explains writer and co-creator Brian K. Vaughan (*Swamp Thing*), who teams with co-creator/artist Pia Guerra and inker José Marzan on the series. "I was in grade school, and I had the fantasy of the girl sitting across from me falling in love with me if only all the other boys in my class would drop dead. So I wanted to use that as the starting point and then subvert that sort of male fantasy and show it for the nightmare that it really is."

The nightmare takes on various facets as it unfolds. *Y—The Last Man* can't be shoe-horned into one genre of storytelling, simply because the story's so big that all types of stories will eventually crop up, including sci-fi, romance and political intrigue as scattered world governments attempt to reorganize and get the planet back on its feet. Plus, there's always the elements of danger surrounding Yorick, who's not only on the run from the feminist factions that want him dead, but also desperately searching for his girlfriend, Beth, who was in Australia the last time Yorick spoke with her.

One element that will remain constant—at least during the outset of the series—will be what exactly caused the deaths of nearly every male on Earth. According to Vaughan, that particular conundrum will be dangling for some time to come.

"I know what caused it, and if you read the first five issues very carefully, there are enough clues to tip you off," teases the scribe. "But it will be a long time in coming, or at least until readers really start hating me! Hopefully, there will be so many other mysteries and intriguing things going on that you'll be okay getting strung along for a while."

If Vaughan's plans for the series continue unabated, readers should be sitting on the edge of their seats indefinitely. The writer calls *Y* a "serialized novel," similar to other finite Vertigo series like *Sandman* and *Preacher*.

"It's hard to imagine a story without an ending," notes Vaughan. "In a lot of superhero books, there's sort of the illusion of a third act. They never really have a finale because they have to go on forever. I love monthly superhero comics and the soap opera aspect of them, but I think it's preferable to have an idea where a story and a character are going to end. I already know what the last panel of the last page is going to be."

OH, [redacted] THEY'RE ALL...
ALL MINE, YEP
BUT IF YOU GIMME A QUICK HAND THROWING THESE DUDES BACK IN THE TRUCK, I MIGHT [redacted] THE PROFITS
THIS... THIS IS YOUR JOB?
BELIEVE IT OR NOT TURNS OUT THERE'S STILL A TON OF SINGLE GUYS ROTTING IN THEIR APARTMENTS AND STINKING UP OFFICE BUILDINGS.
EVERYONE'S WORRIED ABOUT DISEASES AND SH[redacted] SO THE CDC GIVES ME A CAN OF FOOD FOR EVERY CORPSE I BRING IN. ONLY WORK I COULD FIND
[redacted] UP, HUH? I USED TO HAVE A MODELING CONTRACT WITH WILHELMINA, AND NOW I'M A [redacted]'AMN GARBAGE GIRL
WORST PART IS, I SPENT THREE GRAND ON MY BOOB JOB JUST BEFORE EVERYTHING HAPPENED. FAT LOT OF GOOD OUR T[redacted]S DO US NOW, RIGHT?
WHAT... WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THESE BODIES?

But before getting that far down the line, Vaughan promises that the upcoming storyarc (issues #6-#10, starting in December) will only continue to whet the audience's appetite for more *Y—The Last Man*.

"We'll have seen a lot of horrible things in the first five issues, so the next storyarc involves Yorick coming to this seemingly utopian place," says Vaughan. "This town seems to have done better without the men around. But of course, they're hiding a dark secret—that terrible cliché—and Yorick will have to discover what it is.

"There's also a romance in store for Yorick," Vaughan continues, "which will be a problem since he's got a fiancée who's stuck in Australia."

If the high-concept premise and varied range of storytelling isn't enough to grab you, Vaughan's throwing in another incentive—a money-back guarantee on any issue disgruntled readers may send him.

"I didn't think the money-back guarantee was necessary, but especially with non-superhero books, you need that extra edge to get people to give it a try," he explains. "But I was really confident that the first issue was good. I couldn't imagine, I guess in my hubris, that anyone would not want to pick up issue #2."

Given the reaction that *Y—The Last Man* has received so far—issues #1 and #2 sold out, and fans have already burned up message boards with their praise—it's safe to say that Vaughan won't be handing out much of his pocket change any time soon.

"The premise is enough to hook people," he attests. "Whether they think it's horrible or whether they think it sounds great, they have to at least give it a try

"And if you hate it, send it back to me! I can always use more comp copies, and I'll find someone who likes it."

Of course, you'd have to be the Last Man on Earth to try something that desperate.

ESCAPE ARTIST Left: Yorick & Ampersand; Above: Disguised as a woman, Yorick meets a corpse-collecting cutie; Below: Ampersand monkies around.

EXILES

Marvel history gets turned on its ear thanks to a dimension-hopping band of mutant adventurers

TIME FLIES A Wolverine-led Alpha Flight (below) is just one of the alternate reality incarnations the Exiles (bottom) have encountered.

Exiles asks the eternal question comic fans love to debate: "What if?" The Exiles—made up of various X-characters and offshoots like the power-stealing Mimic, Blink from "Age of Apocalypse" and Nocturne, the daughter of Nightcrawler and Scarlet Witch—are an alternate reality-bouncing group of mutants plucked from their respective dimensions by a mysterious benefactor called the Time Broker. If they want their lives back, they must repair the damage done in any number of alternate realities.

Essentially, *Exiles* is Marvel's old *What If...?* series with the continuity of an established cast of characters.

"*What If...?* was the best comic in the world," proclaims *Exiles* writer Judd Winick of the series that showed alternate endings to famed storylines. "[But] what was tough was that it was an anthology with different writers and artists. It lacked consistency. I knew when I started *Exiles* that I wanted to write these characters as flesh and blood."

The team's journeys have taken them from familiar periods of X-Men history to the most outlandish scenarios imaginable. Their first mission (issues #1-#2) brought them to a world where superheroes and mutants met with zero tolerance. When the Exiles freed a captive Charles Xavier, it turned out he was a radical extremist in favor of destroying mankind! They followed that adventure by landing smack dab in the middle in the Trial of Phoenix, only this time she's destined to kill the X-Men and destroy the galaxy. It's up to the reluctant Exiles to kill Jean Grey before she can go bad!

The twisted takes on continuity make *Exiles* one of the most unpredictable, entertaining books around (thanks in large part to the art team of Mike McKone, Jim Calafiore and Mark McKenna). There are no boundaries the Exiles can't cross, no storyline that can't be altered and—save for the development of the Exiles characters—no continuity restraints.

"I guess the idea of turning continuity on its head is what makes [the series] so appealing," explains Winick. "With 'What If...?'-type stories, you get some of the best moments in comics that don't actually count."

The "What Ifs...?" get more outrageous in future storylines. Issues #18-#19 see the Exiles plucked from the timestream by Mojo, and in issues #20-#22, the Exiles join Henry Pym and a small band of Avengers to save the world from the Legacy Virus, which has ravaged most of the planet, creating a race of zombie-like creatures.

Following that, the Exiles land in a reality where Captain America lost his battle with Baron Blood (from *Captain America* #253-#254), became a vampire king and has turned the Avengers into bloodsuckers!

"What could be worse than Captain America as a vampire?" asks Winick. "That story is one of the best, but I wanted to put a different spin on it. It's going to be a kick-ass fight! We have a whole world to ourselves, and we get to play with every toy in the toy box!"

ALIAS

A superhero-turned-P.I. investigates the darkest corners of the Marvel Universe

With a workload that includes spying on Captain America and playing J. Jonah Jameson for a fool, it's a good thing Jessica Jones has superpowers

In Marvel/MAX's *Alias*, the super-strong investigator-for-hire works one of the seediest beats imaginable, operating in between the panels of what's normally seen in the shimmering Marvel U.

"She's a former superhero, but it's never really about her powers," explains writer Brian Michael Bendis (*Ultimate Spider-Man*), who teams with artist Michael Gaydos on the series. "It's about her cases. They lead toward learning things about the Marvel Universe that you normally wouldn't see. The mystery's always Marvel related—history, continuity, how certain events affected things."

In the first *Alias* arc, Jessica investigates a woman who's involved with a man who happens to be Captain America! Jessica accidentally videotapes Steve Rogers changing into Cap on the woman's roof, and when she winds up murdered, Jessica becomes a suspect in the killing. Later, Jessica learns that she was surreptitiously hired by a Washington power broker looking to expose Captain America in order to hurt the current presidential administration.

It's these types of dirty deeds that seriously affect Jessica's mental state. She's dealing with raging cases of self-doubt, self-loathing, borderline alcoholism and the general hatred of humanity that comes from seeing the absolute worst it has to offer on a daily basis.

Things haven't gotten any less complicated. In issues #11-#14, she's forced to leave the confines of Manhattan to head to a small upstate town where a teenage girl has gone missing. Upon learning that the girl may have been a mutant, Jessica suddenly comes face to face with full-blown mutant hysteria.

"What if there were this town with no mutants, and one of their own people crops up who could be one?" poses Bendis. "They'd just be up in arms! Where's the seed of that hatred coming from? *Alias* gives me the opportunity to explore that kind of stuff."

Bendis has big plans for upcoming issues, including one shocker that fans have been begging for: Why did Jessica stop being a superhero?

"It's pretty intense," proclaims Bendis. "It's one of those things that comes back to haunt her. It's a flashback story where she faces a Marvel supervillain whose powers are really horrifying if handled right. One of the themes I'm going to get into is that villains are essentially created to get beaten by their respective foes. For example, the Green Goblin would kill Captain America if they ever fought. This story is going to be the perfect example of that kind of 'What If ..?'"

Villain swapping? Horrifying superpowers? Airing dirty little secrets? Good thing Jessica Jones is on the case.

HARD KNOCK LIFE For private eye Jessica Jones (top), videotaping a striptease from Captain America is all in a day's work.

QUEEN & COUNTRY

British secret agent Tara Chace risks her life and her sanity in the bloody world of international espionage.

SPY GAME SIS Agent Tara Chace (below) is still reeling from the aftermath of her first assassination (right).

Forget the gadgets and the girls—the real spy business is bloody and brutal. Oni Press' ongoing *Queen & Country* examines the world of espionage as seen through the eyes of Tara Chace, an agent for the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), the British equivalent of our CIA. Chace and the other agents—known as Minders—work out of Special Section, performing various tasks ranging from intelligence gathering to assassination.

In the first storyarc ("Broken Ground," issues #1-#4), Chace performs her first assassination, prompting the Russian mafia to put a $1 million bounty on her head. Her personal life's in shambles as well: She drinks too much, can't form lasting relationships and is forced to visit the SIS' resident psychologist following an attempt on her life.

"I'm trying to stress this sense of realism," explains series writer Greg Rucka (*Ultimate Daredevil & Elektra*). "It's not our world, but it's very close."

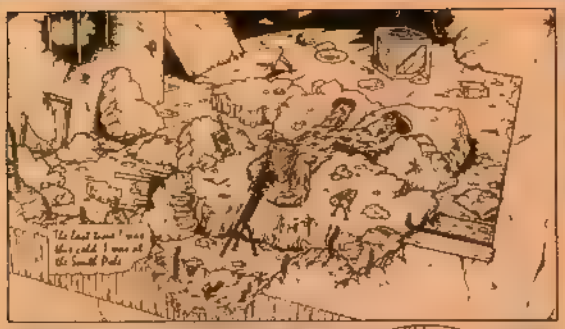
All of the real-life details (actual terrorists, tricks of the espionage trade) threaded through Rucka's stories begs the question: Where does he obtain his information? As the writer himself will attest, he's got his own network of intelligence gathering that he draws on to produce *Q&C*.

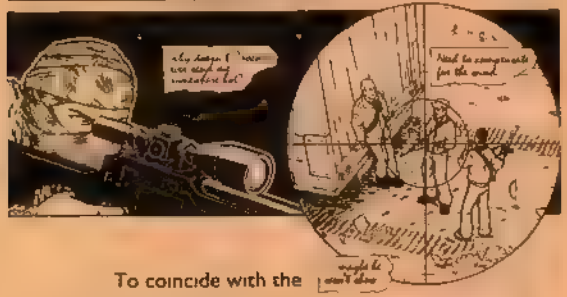
"I read a lot of newspapers, do a lot of online research," notes Rucka. "I know people in the State Department, the Pentagon, people in the FBI, and current and retired military personnel. My brother Nick's got a Master's degree in international policy from the Monterey Institute of International Studies. He's given me a lot of source material."

For his latest Q&C project, Rucka had to look back for his inspiration. *Queen & Country: Declassified* is a three-issue mini-series kicking off in November with art by Jason Alexander. The story stars Paul Crocker, the Director of Operations for the SIS, and is set in 1986 when Crocker still worked as a Minder. His mission is to get a defector out from behind the Iron Curtain, but everything goes sour when the KGB learns of their plans, forcing Crocker to attempt a bust-out.

"A bust-out is something that every Minder tries once, but it scares them so much, they never do it again," explains Rucka. "Of course, that's if they survive it. *Declassified*'s a more traditional spy story, in that you are dealing less with what's going on back in London than you are with Crocker out in the field."

ALL FOUR LOVE





BENDIS

RUCKA

VAUGHAN

WINICK

To coincide with the final issue of *Declassified*, Oni has designated January as "Queen & Country Month." January also sees the release of the *Crystal Ball* trade paperback (collecting issues #8-#12) and *Q&C* #13, which kicks off a brand-new storyarc in which the Special Section investigates a blackmail scheme involving the French government.

If *Queen & Country* sounds like the perfect balance of realism and entertainment, then Rucka considers his mission accomplished.

"The first and foremost duty is not to educate, it's to entertain," says Rucka. "But I strongly believe that no story, no art, is just about entertainment. There's always more going on, whether it's intentional or not. You have to know what you're talking about. Then you use that to tell a story that people will get a kick out of." (W)

Wizard Associate Editor Andy Serwin is constantly getting a buzz from comics—by sniffing the paper as soon as they roll off the presses

R

unmasking BATMAN

by JIM McLAUCHLIN

WHILE BOB KANE GETS ALL THE CREDIT, BATMAN CO-CREATOR BILL FINGER DIED PENNILESS, A FOOTNOTE TO ONE OF COMICS GREATEST CREATIONS

The one mystery the Dark Knight Detective can't solve? The riddle of his own creation.

Crack open the cover to *any* Batman comic—*Batman*, *Detective Comics*, *World's Finest*, whatever—and you'll find one communality: The phrase "Batman created by Bob Kane."

But many insiders will tell you that this simple statement of seeming fact is every bit as fictional as the Bat-tale it introduces. At the very least, they'll tell you the statement is incomplete. Oh, they'll admit, sometimes grudgingly, that Kane should be there. But they'll also tell you that you wouldn't be reading the book today—hell, you probably even wouldn't have *heard* of Batman—were it not for the contributions of another man.

Bill Finger.

Haven't heard of him? You're not alone. Finger's cautionary tale is not well known, but it's every bit as compelling as that of Batman himself.

"We're all attracted to tragedy, and he's a tragic figure," says current *Detective Comics* writer Ed Brubaker. "He did so much so well for so long! He was the most inventive guy on the book, worked on it for decades, and in the end, it got him nothing."

Just what did Finger do? At the very least, he wrote Batman tales for over 20 years, introducing the character in *Detective Comics* #27, penning the first Robin story in *Detective* #38, and introducing the Joker, Penguin, Catwoman, Bat-Mite, and the very Batcave itself. At the most, he may have ensured that Batman existed at all.

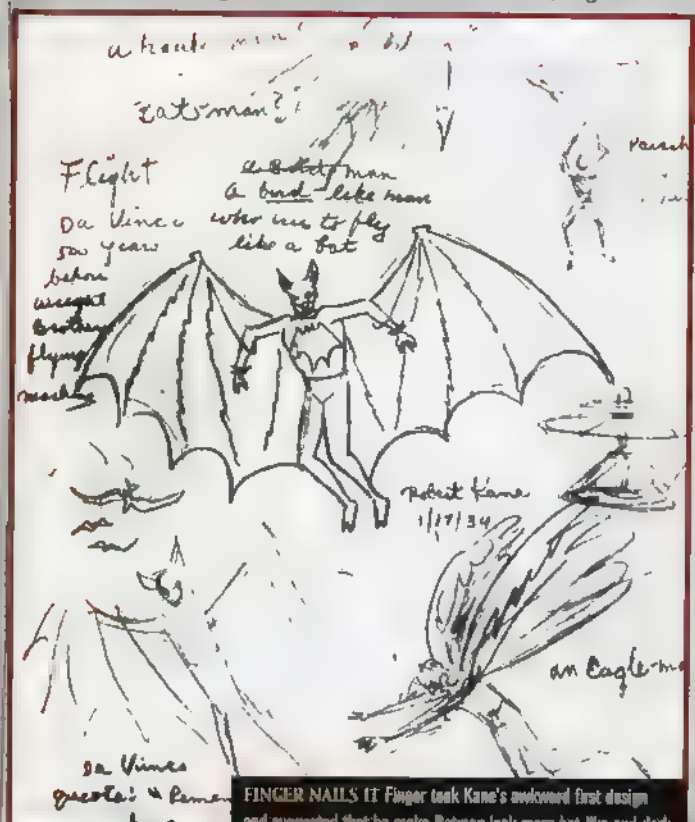
THE VOICE OF REASON

DC Comics (then called National Periodical Publications) saw it had a hit on its hands when Superman debuted in 1938. The order came down to editors Whitney Ellsworth and Vin Sullivan: Bring us another long underwear-type. Ellsworth turned to Bob Kane, a 22-year-old cartoonist doing some humor strips for the publisher at the time, who drew up something called "The Bat-Man." Kane's design was influenced by Superman, Zorro, a silent film called "The Bat," and a Leonardo da Vinci design of a flying machine. Kane's original Batman wore red tights with a Zorro-styled mask, and had two stiff-looking wings mounted to the back of the costume. The mish-mashed combination didn't wow anyone, Kane included.

Kane wasn't sure if his design would pass muster, so he called an old high school classmate for a friendly chat and a second opinion, a man he knew to be a creative sort. He called Bill Finger.

The 25-year-old Finger came over to Kane's apartment and agreed the design needed work. He set to that work immediately. Pulling a dictionary off Kane's shelf, he opened to a picture of a bat. "Bill said, 'Why not make him look more like a bat and put a hood on him, and take the eyeballs out and just put slits for eyes to make him look more mysterious?'" Kane recounts in his 1989 autobiography, *Batman & Me*.

Batman's domino mask changed into a full cowl. Finger also suggested making the color scheme darker. "Color it dark gray to make it look more ominous," Kane recalls him saying. Finger also got rid of the wings, evolving them into Batman's now-famous cape. In mere hours, the Batman we all know today was born of Finger's tinkering with Kane's awkward design. If Kane was indeed Batman's father, Finger was at least the doctor who delivered the baby—and probably prevented a dud.



FINGER NAILS IT Finger took Kane's awkward first design and suggested that he make Batman look more bat-like and dark.

WONDER BOY The first Robin story in *Detective Comics* #38 was written by Finger.

THE FATEFUL CONTRACT

DC loved Batman and immediately commissioned Kane to produce it. Kane, knowing Finger was up to the task and knowing Finger *desperately* wanted to be a writer, sub-contracted Finger to write Batman's first story for *Detective Comics* #27. Kane also did something else: He got a contract.

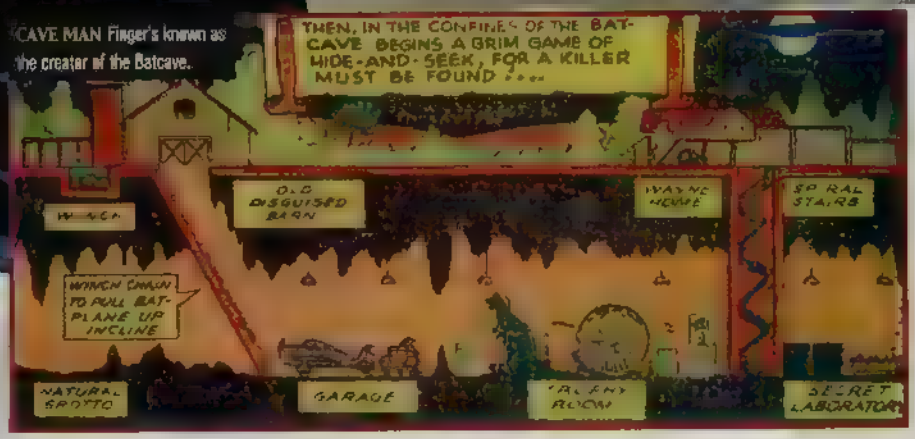
Kane came from a well-to-do New York family with enough money to employ lawyers to nail down Kane's interest in the character. Soon after the conception, Kane secured an ownership percentage in Batman and an ironclad legal guarantee that for now and forever, all Batman tales would start with the tag "Batman created by Bob Kane."

Finger came from a poor background in the Bronx, and in fact had been bedridden for months with a case of scarlet fever as a child. It was there in bed, with nowhere to go, that he fell in love with reading. He devoured books by the dozens, and it became his lifelong dream to one day become a writer himself. When Kane made his fateful call to Finger, the writer was barely scraping by with a low-paying job as a shoe salesman. Given the opportunity to write for a living, he leapt at the chance. For the first six Batman stories, Finger was Kane's employee, nothing more. It wasn't until the seventh script that Finger got paid via DC. They may not have even *known* he existed at the time.

THE BAT-BOOM

Batman was booming and Kane, realizing where his financial interests lay, hired a stable of artists to produce more material. The work was very collaborative. One day, Kane mentioned to Finger that Batman needed a boy sidekick. Finger said that he'd dream one up, and went out for a sandwich. By the time he returned, Kane and inker Jerry Robinson had already nailed a name: Robin. Finger then wrote the first Robin tale.

Similarly, Finger "found" the Joker for Kane to draw. Accounts vary as to if Kane or Robinson came up with the notion of the psychotic villain, but it was definitely Finger


THEN, IN THE CONFINES OF THE BAT-CAVE BEGINS A GRIM GAME OF HIDE-AND-SEEK, FOR A KILLER MUST BE FOUND !...
D.G. DISGUISED BARN
WAYNE MANOR
SPIRAL STAIRS
WOMEN CHAIN TO PULL BAT-PLANE UP INCLINE
NATURAL GROTTO
GARAGE
TROPHY ROOM
SECRET LABORATORY

CAVE MAN Finger's known as the creator of the Batcave.

who delivered the visual. "Bill came in with a photograph of Conrad Veidt, who played in a movie called 'The Man Who Laughs,'" Kane relays in *Batman & Me*. "'Here's a picture of the Joker character,' Bill exclaimed. 'Copy it and I'll write the first Joker story.'"

Kane, "a superb copyist" in his own words, copied; and Bill Finger wrote the Joker's first two stories, in *Batman* #1 and #2. But every story, regardless of who wrote it, drew it, or came up with a new character, came out with the same byline: "By Bob Kane," as per Kane's contract.

"In the early days, only the originators put their names on strips, regardless of whether they had ghost-writers or ghost-artists doing their features," Kane says in *Batman & Me*. "I never thought of giving [Finger] a byline, and he never asked for one." Still, as the originator and a co-owner, Kane enjoyed healthy bonuses based on sales. Finger made his script rate of $12 a page, and still lived with his parents, helping his poor family make ends meet.

Finger wanted *too* desperately to be a writer; he would do anything to remain in his position, and rise out of poverty. "He was so overwhelmed that he was getting steady jobs that he never thought of anything else," says Sheldon Moldoff, an artist who ghosted for Kane for 16 years. "He just wanted to be a writer. Bill was so happy he was working, he didn't think about royalties, rights, any of that. He was very grateful to Bob."

Perhaps too grateful. Golden Age artist Martin Nodell once visited Kane's apartment with Finger in tow. "We rang the bell, and Bob Kane came to the door," Nodell recalls. "When Bill entered the room, it was if he was greeting the king. Bill was bowing down, his hands out, just to say hello. That, in essence, was the way it was. Bill felt as if he had to condescend before Kane."

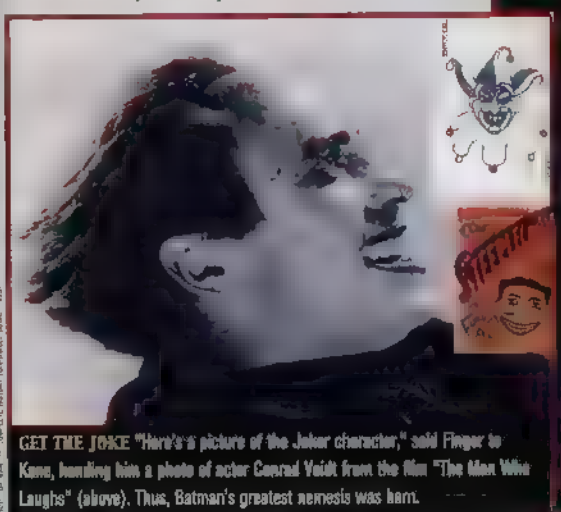
The love was not returned. "Bob Kane never was a nice guy," Moldoff says flatly. "He had a tremendous ego. If I came up with an idea, he had no problem stealing it and claiming it as his own. Was Bob generous to Bill Finger? No. Was he nice with him? No. Bob wasn't nice to *anybody*."

THE NICE GUY

Finger, on the other hand, was known for his kindness and generosity. Jerry Robinson was only 17 years old, consumed by school all day and drawing all night, when he started in the Kane studio. Finger took the youngster under his wing. "Bill was very much my cultural mentor," Robinson remembers. "He exposed me to potential. He brought me to museums, to fine movies. That inspired us both."

Finger's love of learning, born of his bedridden childhood, never stopped. "I don't think he had a college education of any kind, but he was very auto-didactic, always self-teaching," said 15-year Batman Editor Denny O'Neil, who credits Finger with mentoring him when O'Neil began his career in 1965. "He made notes constantly. He was very observational."

Finger was famous for taking his job seriously. He kept *huge* files



GET THE JOKE "Here's a picture of the Joker character," said Finger to Kane, handing him a photo of actor Conrad Veidt from the film "The Man Who Laughs" (above). Thus, Batman's greatest nemesis was born.

"Hey, I'm feeling like Bill Finger over here. And I don't want to get FINGERED."

– ED BRUBAKER, CURRENT BAT-WRITER ON WHAT TO SAY IF YOU'RE NOT GETTING DUE CREDIT

of articles clipped from newspapers and *Popular Science*. Whenever Batman needed a way out of a tough situation, Finger could refer to his files and find one. The technical wonders of the Batcave, with its computers, submarine pens, and Giant Penny, sprang from the imagination and files of Finger. Other comic writers of the time surely knew his importance. A Golden Age Green Lantern villain who pulled his crimes from a huge book of tricks was named "William Hand," an obvious riff on Bill Finger's name.

RISE AND FALL While Kane lived the Hollywood life in the mid-1960s, Finger fell into obscurity.

But Finger was more than just a book of tricks. "He was one of the guys who showed us how to do this work in this new medium," O'Neil maintains. "Comics were really brand-new at the time—the umbilical cord hadn't even been cut. And Bill really understood, almost instinctually, how to do it. He really had a handle on writing for comics. I've seen some of [Superman co-creator] Jerry Siegel's original scripts, and it was these two guys, Siegel and Finger, who really first understood writing for comics. They taught the next generation."

THE WORK HORSE

But that which made Finger great was also his downfall. Finger cared *too* much about his work, and refused to turn in a script until it was perfect. For a poor man who never made much money…this was a problem.

"Bill was the greatest comics writer of his time, and maybe since," says Jerry Robinson. "But he was not a *natural* writer. Things didn't flow from his pen. He really struggled every time."

Finger once delivered a first page of a script stapled to a bunch of blank pages to an editor, hurriedly grabbing his check and bolting the office before his editor could see that the work wasn't finished. Missing deadlines led to lack of income, which led to paralyzing fear, alcoholism, and more missed deadlines. By the mid-1950s, Kane had moved to California and was comfortably out of comics, with a massive studio producing work in his name. Finger still struggled, with both deadlines and money.

"The second Batman story he ever did for me [in the early '60s], I made him sign a little note that went roughly as follows: 'I, William Finger, will not ask for the check for this story until I've completed it,'" says longtime DC Editor Julius Schwartz. "He had a habit of always needing money, and before he'd finish a story, he'd ask for a check. And he was invariably late."

By the mid-1960s, things were changing. New editors were coming in at DC, and Kane hadn't been personally involved for years. Finger's assignments dwindled away, and he fell off editors' radar. Finger, once known as the best writer in comics, became almost an urban legend to new editors. He'd occasionally be seen haunting a bar, but no one would give him an assignment, fearing certain deadline problems. By 1965, Finger was out of comics. He resurfaced very briefly writing mystery stories at DC in the early '70s, but at the time of his death in 1974, Finger had lost the only thing that really mattered to him. He wasn't a writer anymore.

THE LEGACY

All that's left today of Finger is his place in history—a place that's largely misplaced. His contributions are lost to the mists of time, and the fact that Bob Kane had the power of an ironclad contract on his side.

"It's impossible to tell exactly who created what anymore," says Denny O'Neil. "The truth is, it's 60 years since, and nobody really kept notes then. But I've spent a lot of time looking at Batman history. It was my main professional concern for 15 years. And near as I have been able to learn, Bill's contributions were *considerable*."

Even Michael Uslan, the producer of the "Batman" movies and a close personal friend of Kane's, agrees. "It was such a great creative effort by so many people over so many decades that really 'created' Batman," Uslan says. "But you

THE LAST LINK

JERRY ROBINSON, THE ASSISTANT TO BOB KANE IN 1939, REMAINS ACTIVE IN COMICS TODAY

ROBINSON

It's been 58 years since Jerry Robinson drew Batman. But it feels as fresh as yesterday.

"I've gone through a number of stages in my career," the 80-year-old artist says today. "But that stage endures, as Batman does."

Robinson got a job inking Batman frontman Bob Kane's pencils at the tender age of 17 in 1939, just as he entered Columbia University as a freshman. He continued working on Batman until 1947, collaborating with Kane, writer Bill Finger and others—even though the creators had little idea just what they were creating.

"We certainly didn't have any thought that this would be popular in 58 years, or even if it would endure at all," Robinson recollects. "But we did have the feeling that were creating a new means of communication with comics."

Robinson has communicated in many venues in his career. He worked at Atlas Comics in the '50s, and in 1966, started a 30-year stint as a political cartoonist with the nationally syndicated "Still Life" and "Life With Robinson." He also taught at New York's School of Visual Arts and Pratt Institute for 16 years. But people always know him as "the Batman guy."

"I've been invited around the world to many comic conventions and festivals," he says. "A lot of it stems from my Batman days, of course."

Robinson has visited 45 countries, and in 1975, formed Cartoonists & Writers Syndicate, a firm that represents 550 artists in 50 different countries, syndicating their work worldwide. One creator in particular, he has special fondness for.

"Bill Finger deserves co-credit for the creation of Batman, simple as that," he states. "It's nice to see that more people are learning about him today. But I wish something could have happened for him in his lifetime." —J.M.

Julius Schwartz has long been an advocate of getting Finger the credit he is due. O'Neil, too. "I certainly think he deserved more that what he got, both in terms of credit and in terms of money," O'Neil says. "There was no way for me to get him money, because of the legalities involved. It may not be fair, but it is the law."

Official credit may be out of the question. "Short of adding his name to the credits, which I don't think can legally be done, I don't think there's anything DC can do," says comic writer and historian Mark Waid. "The Bob Kane estate is protected. Bob Kane's selfishness continues from beyond the grave."

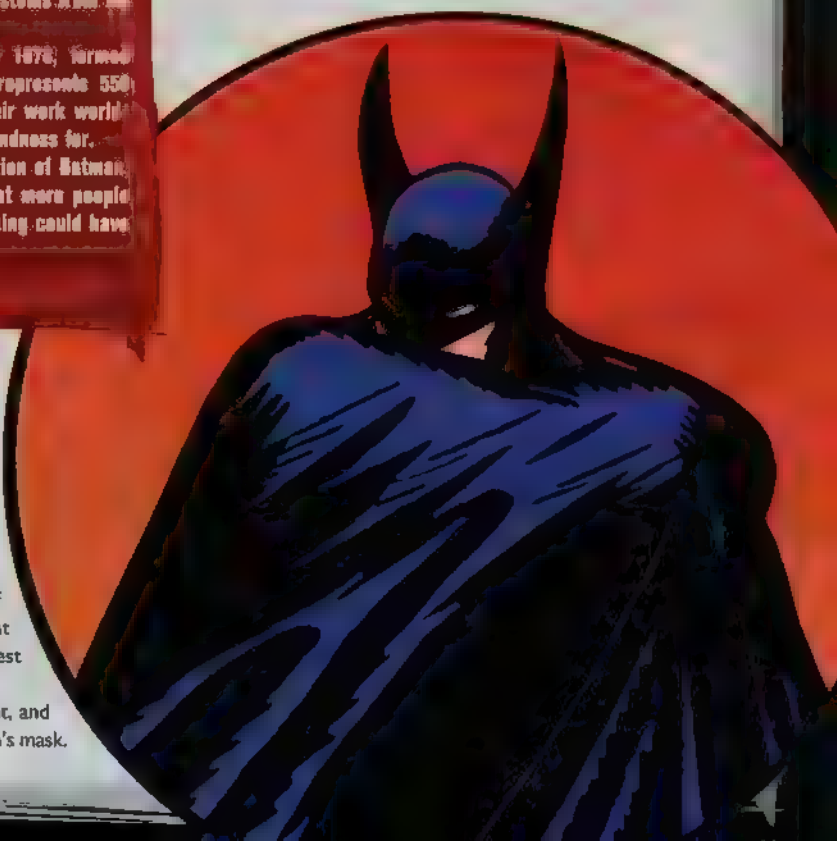
Kane grew rich off of Batman and lived a comfortable life until he passed away in 1998. Finger died an unfulfilled man, never enjoying the late-life accolades or money that did eventually come to Superman co-creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster.

"Siegel and Shuster are looked at as these guys who really got screwed until later in life. Bill Finger is like them, except he never got un-screwed," says Ed Brubaker

And Finger has left something more behind than just Batman for other creators to follow. "It's a different scene," Brubaker says. "If you write *Batman* right now and create a new character, regardless of the fact that Bob Kane created the comic, *you* would get money for that character. Chuck Dixon got money when they used Bane in the 'Batman and Robin' movie. These things are in place now *because* of creators like Bill Finger. The business is more human now."

Finger also has a final, more chilling legacy, according to Brubaker. "The greatest thing, but also the most f---ed thing about Bill Finger is that if you're ever in a situation where you're worried that you're not getting proper credit for what you're doing, you can say to your editor, 'Hey, I'm feeling like Bill Finger over here. And I don't want to get Fingered.' And they'll understand. Everybody gets it. I guarantee it."

Jim McLauchlin urges you to think about Bill Finger, just a little bit next time you read a Batman comic



still have to look at Bill Finger as one of the two essentials. It's Kane-and-Finger—and I say that in one breath—who were there at the beginning."

Even Kane could give Finger his due. "I must admit that Bill never received the fame and recognition he deserved. He was an unsung hero," Kane wrote in *Batman & Me*, which he dedicated, among others, to Finger. "I ran into Bill a year before he died in 1974. Bill was disheartened by the lack of major accomplishments in his career. He felt that he had not used his creative potential to its fullest and that success had passed him by."

But crafting Batman *is* a major accomplishment, and more people are learning of the man behind Batman's mask.

EXTRAORDINARY DETAILS

BY MIKE COTTON

IF YOU think only God's in the details, then you've never read stories by Alan Moore.

Building a reputation throughout his career for throwing cameos, topical events and visual in-jokes into his comics, the *Watchmen* writer and creator of WildStorm's entire ABC line of titles has become as well known for his attention to detail as he has for great works such as *Swamp Thing* and *From Hell*. And there's no title Moore packs more Easter eggs into than his *League of Extraordinary Gentleman* series.

"It actually comes back to both [*League* artist] Kevin [O'Neill] and I," says Moore. "When it comes to dialogue or a significant action, I usually come up with that, but Kevin tends to throw in a literary reference in his art here and there. I like to fit everything together without violating the original stories too often. I like to keep it as constant as possible."

Set in the closing years of the 19th century, *LoEG* Volumes I and II feature the most notable and notorious characters from classic novels, such as *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and *The Invisible Man*, which the English writer's plucked for his own use. Within those novels, Moore discovered a cast of characters—including Mina Murray from *Dracula*, the Invisible Man, Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Captain Nemo and Alan Quatermain—that he developed into a team of early adventurers set to save England from its foes.

In Moore's first foray with the League, everyone from Sherlock Holmes to Ishmael from *Moby Dick* showed up, as the team took on a Fu Manchu-inspired villain set on bombing London. And in the second volume of adventure, readers have already been privy to a brief cameo by John Carter of Mars as well as the native Mars inhabitants (based on H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* characters) that have landed on Earth ready to destroy the UK.

But the prolific writer's most detailed work may seem a little too detailed to the average comic book fan—or even the hardcore literary types. The number of cameos and details from *League* rank in the hundreds; practically every page oozes with background characters or scenes gathered from classic literature. In fact, whole Websites devote themselves to picking out every nuance of Moore's opus.

Wizard's even helped out. Consider this the *Cliffs Notes* version of *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (well, up to Vol. 2 #2, at press time). Fans won't find reference to every character from such obscure works as the erotic anonymous thriller *The Yellow Room* or Emile Zola's *L'Assommoir* and *Nana*, but here's a rundown of some of the most popular and influential characters and scenes Moore has crafted into a League of his own.

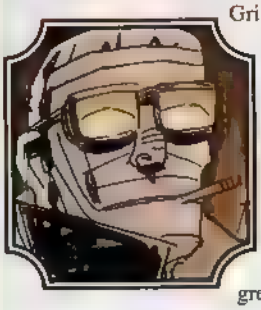
MINA MURRAY

In Bram Stoker's 1897 horror classic *Dracula*, the title vampire bites Mina and forces her to drink his blood. By novel's end, Murray's restored to her human form, but in *League*, she's divorced her husband (Jonathan Harker) and donned a scarf to cover her scars. "Mina's a very different woman than she is in *Dracula*," says Moore. "And she'd have to be to make it through those events. She'd either be a complete wreck or find new reserves of fortitude."

CAPTAIN NEMO

The lead in Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, the Indian prince took up arms against the British after the country brutalized the Indians during an uprising between 1857-1858. Many *League* fans suspect Nemo might be Sherlock Holmes in disguise, but Moore says Holmes is thought to be dead during this story and won't reemerge until the early 1900s.

THE INVISIBLE MAN



Only referred to as Dr Griffin in H.G. Wells' *The Invisible Man*, he was given the first name of Hawley by Moore as a reference to Dr. Hawley Crippen, who poisoned his wife in 1910, instantly gaining infamy in pre-World War II Britain. In the novel, a mob tramples Griffin to death, but as Murray reports, the rumors of his death must have been greatly exaggerated.

ALLAN QUATERMAIN

The star of H. Rider Haggard's series of novels, including *King Solomon's Mines*, Quatermain stands as one of the most well-known and influential adventure heroes of all time. His exploits—featuring lost African tribes and searches for treasure—make him a direct predecessor to heroes like Indiana Jones. Although the hero supposedly died in 1885's *Allan Quatermain and The Lost City of Gold*, Moore resurrects him as an opium addict searching for redemption.

HENRY JEKYLL/EDWARD HYDE

From Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Jekyll uses drugs to separate his savage side from his normal self, thus creating Hyde, a huge, barbarian of enormous strength and savagery

CAMPION BOND

An agent of the British Secret Service, Bond directs the League's activities and may be the first in a long line of individuals who have served Queen and Country. Moore reportedly created Bond as an ancestor to James Bond of Ian Fleming's novels. "That would seem to be likely wouldn't it? Or it could just be a coincidence," teases Moore. "But remember that James Bond is still in copyright. So, who knows?"

VOLUME I, ISSUE #1

Page 17, Panel 6 Murray and Quatermain find Jekyll with the aid of French detective Auguste Dupin from Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Murders at the Rue Morgue," which is credited as the first modern detective novel. "I really like all of Poe's stuff," admits Moore. "Poe invented the detective story! It deserves commemorating," demands Moore. "We want to commemorate all the great stuff that all these masters of the fantastic and adventure have created. It's so rich. It would be terribly sad if this stuff became just dusty and unfashionable."

Page 18, Panel 4 "The Whitechapel fiend" Dupin mentions is of course an old favorite of Moore's—Jack the Ripper. The Ripper killed five prostitutes in London's Whitechapel district in 1888 and the case was the basis for Moore's 1991's mini-series *From Hell*, which in 2001 was turned into a film starring Johnny Depp. "I still haven't seen it," chuckles Moore.

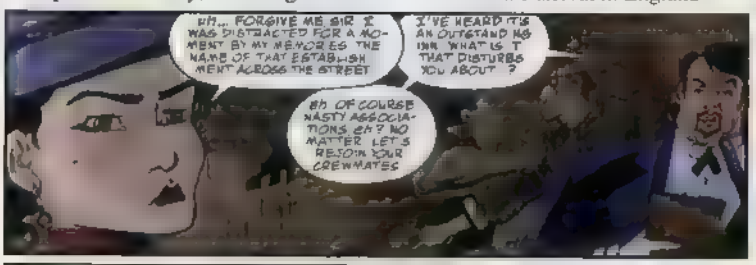
NOW, WE'RE LONDON'S STILL-UNCAPTURED WHITECHAPEL FIEND FROM TEN YEARS AGO. PERHAPS THIS MISSING DOCTOR I AM SEEKING IS ?
NO AGAIN THIS IS NO MAN, AN APE, WE'RE FIGURE WAS REPORTED FLEEING THE MURDER SCENES

VOLUME I, ISSUE #2

Page 9, Panel 1 A popular predecessor to Sherlock Holmes, Inspector Donovan is Dick Donovan, who starred in many short stories by Joyce Emmerson Preston, including the noteworthy "Who Poisoned Hetty Duncan?"

A WASPISH TONGUE, MISS MURRAY, IS TO MY MIND BUT ONE OF THE MANY UNATTRACTIVE FEATURES OF THE MODERN SUFFRAGETTE
RIGHT YOU ARE SIR
INSPECTOR DONOVAN? IF YOU AND YOUR MEN WILL ATTEND TO HER COMPANIONS, MISS MURRAY AND I HAVE MATTERS TO DISCUSS

Page 10, Panel 3 Mina Murray is distracted here by a sign from across the street. The sign is for "Prospect of Whitby," one of London's oldest pubs. Most of *Dracula* took place in Whitby, including the location of Dracula's arrival in England.


UH... FORGIVE ME SIR I WAS DISTRACTED FOR A MOMENT BY MY MEMORIES THE NAME OF THAT ESTABLISHMENT ACROSS THE STREET
I'VE HEARD IT'S AN OUTSTANDING INN. WHAT IS IT THAT DISTURBS YOU ABOUT ?
AH OF COURSE NASTY ASSOCIATIONS, EH? NO MATTER LET'S RESUME YOUR CREWMATES

Page 12, Panel 1 The "Correctional Academy for Wayward Gentlewomen" was part of the Rosa Coote stories in *The Pearl*, an anthology magazine of stories published between the late 1870s and early '80s. "Most of this is just in my head," says Moore. "It's all up here or I know where the book is. There is a certain amount of research when it comes to getting names right or things such as that, but most of it's just in my head."

Page 13, Panel 2 Olive Chancellor is the bullheaded American feminist in Henry James' 1886 novel *The Bostonians*. "I constantly have people like [*Hellboy* creator] Mike Mignola, [letterer] Todd Klein and others sending me names and ideas for people and places I don't know. I'm using all kinds of channels to get this information. It's staggering," admits Moore.

THAT'S THE KEY TO EVERYTHING
TAKE THAT OLIVE CHANCELLOR YOU WILFUL GIRL! AND THAT WE'LL SOON THRASH YOUR INDEPENDENT AMERICAN WAYS OUT OF YOU
AHHH! MERCY MISS CARR, I AM DYING AGH!

Page 19, Panel 4 The victim of rape by the Invisible Man on p. 15-17, Polly Whittier is Pollyanna, the heroine of Eleanor H. Porter's *Pollyanna*. Her word balloon here sums up, of course, a perfect case of being a Pollyanna (overly optimistic).

OH, I'M FINE, MA'AM, ALTHOUGH I'VE BEEN MISHANDLED BY A DEMON, I'M DETERMINED TO REMAIN OPTIMISTIC, NO MATTER WHAT
DEAR POLLYANNA SUCH A PLUCKY CHILD!
UH, YES WELL, IN THAT CASE, I'LL JOIN MY COLLEAGUES

Page 20, Panel 4 The small skull in the glass case comes from a Yahoo, a tribe in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Given that, the large skull appears to be a Brobdignagian, one of the giants from the same novel, while the miniature figures to the left are likely Lilliputians, the first race Gulliver encounters.

VOLUME I, ISSUE #3

Page 2 The carvings "Hispaniola 1760" and "Skeleton Island" come from R.L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. *Hispaniola* is the name of the ship in which Jim Hawkins and Long John Silver sailed to Skeleton Island on. "Captain Nemo was a great collector of things," says Moore. "He collected nautical curios. Nemo purchased one of the few surviving copies of the Arabic logbooks of Sinbad the Sailor. On the ship and back on his island, he's got hundreds of bits and pieces from different seafaring stories going back to *The Odyssey*. He probably has the Ancient Mariner's albatross on a string somewhere moldering in the corner of the Nautilus."

Page 23, Panel 2 Walking through the British Museum, Mina Murray stops to look at a portrait of a previous League, which included (from left):

Lemuel Gulliver The *Gulliver's Travels* star journeyed to a world containing both giants and miniature people in Swift's 1726 novel. He's seen here with a Lilliputian cow that he brought back at the end of his first trip.

Mr. & Mrs. P. Blakeny Sir Percy and Marguerite Blakeny star in Baroness Emmuska Orczy's 1905 novel *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and its numerous sequels.

The Rev. Dr. Syn This dark hero hails from Russell Thorndike's 1915 *Doctor Syn* and its six prequels, in which a cleric takes up the guise of a pirate to find his missing wife and eventually kills the men responsible for her kidnapping and death.

Mistress Hill This busty belle appears in John Cleland's mid-1700s series of erotic novels such as *Fanny Hill* and *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*.

Natty Bumpo He's better known as Hawkeye, the star of James Fennimore Cooper's 1826 novel, *The Last of the Mohicans*.

"We've made reference to at least two other Leagues," reveals Moore. "There's actually a second Miss Murray group that I hope to bring in later. I'm still trying to decide which characters are appropriate for the time we're talking about. I think the next volume of *League* will show different Leagues at different times. You'll probably see the League from the portrait in a two-part story in the next volume."

NO OBJECTIONS? VERY WELL
WE ARE RESOLVED TO TRACK THIS 'DEVIL DOCTOR' TO HIS DEN IN LEMOUSE AND RETRIEVE THE CAVORITE
THE MOTION IS THUS CARRIED

Page 4, Panel 4 The headline on the paper in this panel reads, "Eruptions On Mars May Be Volcanoes," which signaled a coming invasion from the Red Planet in H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. The headline is also a hint at the coming invasion the League faces from Mars in *League of Extraordinary Gentleman* Vol. II. "I always kept in mind that *War of the Worlds* was published in 1898," says Moore. "I pretty much knew from the word 'go' that the second volume would be 'Mars Attacks.'"

Page 12, Panel 1 The warlord from the Orient, known only as "The Doctor," is revealed here for the first time. He's reportedly based on Fu Manchu, who couldn't be used by Moore because the character is still owned under copyright. "We came up with an Asiatic doctor who filled the same role," says Moore. "If you don't refer to things directly by their names or common names, you can usually get by."

Page 19, Panel 12 The names on the outside of the shelter just above Quatermain's right shoulder and almost out of frame are the writers who created the characters used by Moore in *League of Extraordinary Gentleman*. The names include H Rider Haggard (creator of Allan Quatermain), Sax Rohmer (Fu Manchu), Edgar Allan Poe (Auguste Dupin), Robert Louis Stevenson (Jekyll/Hyde), Bram Stoker (Mina Murray), Jules Verne (Captain Nemo) and H.G. Wells (Invisible Man, the Martians in *War of the Worlds*).

VOLUME I, ISSUE #4

CALL ME ISHMAEL. CAPTAIN, YOU'VE KNOWN ME LONG ENOUGH
AS FOR YOUR NEW SHIP MATES, QUATERMAIN'S A DECENT CHAP AND YOUR MISS MURRAY'S ALREADY FOR A BIT O F LIFE
WHAT OF GRIFFIN AND YEARLE?

Page 1, Panel 2 "Call me Ishmael" is the opening line from Herman Melville's 1851 classic *Moby Dick* and one of the most famous lines from literary history. Ishmael narrated the novel, surviving the battle between Captain Ahab and the great white whale. Beside Ishamel stands Broad Arrow Jack, a young English, Robin Hood-type hero of the 1866 short, adventure-filled penny dreadful novels that were printed on crude paper and usually contained no more than a few short stories.

Page 9, Panel 2-3 Note the "Shelter" name is broken into two panels, making it look to read, "Helter Skelter." "That's just 'Shelter.' That's just an accident of the artwork," chuckles Moore. "Whether Kevin has converted to the Manson family or is working in subliminal messages I don't know. I'm innocent on that one."

Page 24, Panel 7 The mysterious "M," who finances the League and gives the group its orders, is revealed to be James Moriarty, Sherlock Holmes' greatest adversary. "He's a classic villain," says Moore. "He's the Napoleon of Crime. The idea of Moriarty being the head of [the British Security Service] MI5 fascinated me. Yes, it might have been in MI5's best interest to create a crime baron that was also one of their agents. That struck me very much like the intelligence services operate. They tend to create their own monsters. I'm sure I don't need to tell American readers that."

VOLUME I, ISSUE #5

Pages 1-7 A reenactment of Sherlock Holmes' death from *The Final Problem*. On page #2, readers see Holmes writing a note to his friend and biographer John Watson. The text of the note reads identically to the one Holmes writes to Watson in the closing scene of *The Final Problem*. Also note the engraving on the outside of the cigarette case Holmes slips the note into; it appears to resemble the League's emblem. As Holmes defeats his enemy in combat, Moriarty lays bleeding and says, "He's going to fake his own death," which is exactly what the great detective does, unbeknownst to readers of *The Final Problem*

VOLUME I, ISSUE #6

Page 3, Panel 4 The haggard old man giving orders to the young homeless children is none other than an elderly Artful Dodger from Charles Dickens' 1838 novel, *Oliver Twist*.

STR KE S ME WHAT S NEEDED IS SOME SORT O SHELTER UNDER THE GROUND FOR PREFERENCE
MITCHELL? JEMMY 2 P A DRAIN-COVER SHARPISH LAD
TWSS MR DODGER

Page 4, Panel 2 The balloon the League uses to take on Moriarty is the *Victoria* from Jules Verne's 1863 novel *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, in which English doctor Samuel Ferguson crosses Africa along with his servant and Scottish friend Dick Kennedy. "This is just another example of something Nemo's picked up along his travels," says Moore. "Originally I was going to use Phineas Fogg's balloon [from Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*] but then we found out he didn't use a balloon in the book." (Fogg did, however, use a balloon in the film version of the classic.)

Page 8, Panel 3 When offered a gun for his alter ego Hyde to use, Dr. Jekyll states, "He's too big to need one. At least he is these days. Do you know, I was once taller than him?" In the original novel, Hyde appeared more like a primate than a man and stood much shorter than Jekyll

TH-THAT IS, HE S TOO BIG TO NEED ONE AT LEAST HE IS THESE DAYS
DO YOU KNOW I WAS ONCE TALLER THAN HE WAS ?
WHILE WISHING YOU NO DISRESPECT DR JEK LL SUGGEST YOU MIGHT DELIGHT US WITH THAT ANECDOTE UPON SOME LESS PREGGING OCCASION
WE RE APPROACHING THE MARSHES

YOU VE DONE ME RATHER A GOOD TURN WITH NOR ARTY S DEATH I BECOME HEAD OF INTELLI-GENCE
THIS SITUATION BENEFITS BOTH MYSELF AND CERTAIN OTHER PARTIES WHO SHALL NEVER KNOW
AH YOU RE REFERRING TO YOUR LATE BROTHER A TRAGIC LOSS

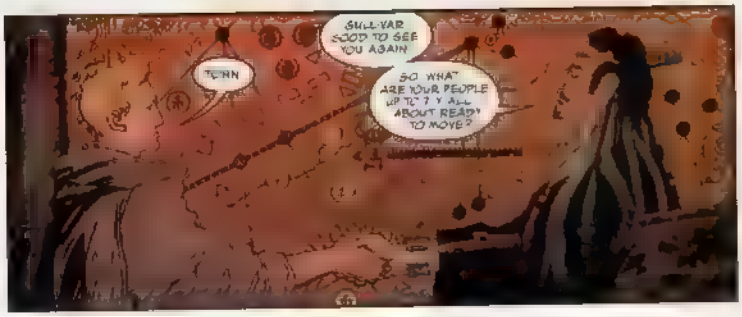
Page 23, Panel 2 The broken walking stick next to Nemo's right arm looks to be the one Moriarty utilized before being carried away by the Cavorite, or anti-gravity metal, used to power The Doctor's infernal flying machine.

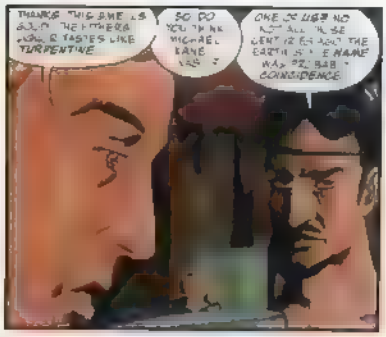
Page 23, Panel 3 The man addressing the League is Mycroft Holmes, the older brother (and some would say superior detective) to Sherlock Holmes. "Mycroft has his own agendas," says Moore. "He has been sitting in the wings for years waiting for Moriarty to make a misstep so he could move into the position at MI5 " Also note that when Murray brings up Holmes' apparent death. Mycroft dismisses the conversation with a simple, "Mm " It's revealed in a later Sherlock Holmes novel, *The Adventure of the Empty House*, that Mycroft already knows his brother did not die at Moriarty's hands as everyone else suspects. "We may reveal what Holmes has been up to at some point in the future," says Moore "I don't know how much of him we'll see in the League. There will be references to him. But in so many ways he's too big of a character to do any more than touch upon lightly He could dominate if he was allowed center stage."

REGARDING THE FIVE OF YOU IT WOULD SUIT ME F YOU MIGHT REMA N HERE AT ENGLAND'S CALL
A SIGNIFICANT RETAINER WOULD OF COURSE BE PROVIDED I BELIEVE WE COULD DOUBLE MY PREDECESSOR'S OFFER

VOLUME II, ISSUE #1

Page 6, Panel 3 The blond-haired man on the left is Edwin L. Arnold's Gulliver Jones from 1905's *Lieutenant Gulliver Jones: His Vacation* in which an American Naval officer is sent to Mars via a flying carpet. The man on the left is Edgar Rice Burroughs' pulp hero John Carter, who was introduced in 1912's *Under the Moons of Mars*. A Civil War veteran, Carter lived in Virginia and was transported by a strange beam to Mars where he had many adventures.




THANKS. THIS WINE IS GOOD. THE FLAVORS ARE COMPLEX & TASTES LIKE TURPENTINE.
SO DO YOU THINK MICHAEL KANE WAS ?
ONE OF US. I'M NOT ALL THESE CENTURIES AND THE EARTH IS STILL A NAME WAS REDUCED TO CONSCIENCE.

Page 7, Panel 2-3 Jones and Carter discuss Michael Kane, the lead character from Michael Moorcock's trilogy of 1965 Mars tales—*Warriors of Mars*, *Blades of Mars* and *Barbarians of Mars*. Kane was a Chicago physics professor who transported himself from Carter and Jones' future to Mars' past.

Page 14 The monster rising from the ground is one of H.G Wells' Martians from *War of the Worlds*. In fact, all of the Martians seen in issue #1 of *League* Vol. II are fashioned after Martians described in *War of the Worlds*, Moorcock's Mars Trilogy and C.S. Lewis' Space Trilogy. "One of the things I was most pleased with in this first issue was that there wasn't much dialogue," admits Moore. "We're getting everything over in pictures. And the pictures are totally down to Kevin. He's done just as much, if not more, visual research for *League* as I've done literary."

Page 18-19, Panel 6 "The egg Gulliver is holding is indeed the same type of device as the fellow in H.G. Wells' *The Crystal Egg* uses to look on to another planet," says Moore. "He sees a winged creature—that's the Sorn that the Molluscs grafted wings on [seen on page 18-19, panel 2]."

VOLUME II, ISSUE #2

Page 1-10 Most of the background characters and events in the first pages of issue #2 find their roots in *War of the Worlds*. "I wanted to stay very faithful to the original work here," says Moore. "All of this action actually comes from the original text."

Page 15, Panel 5 This scene refers to the dream Quatermain had in "Allan and the Sundered Veil," the short tale from back up story to the first *League* mini-series.

VOLUME II, WHAT'S NEXT?

"I can't tell you too much about the rest of Vol. II for fear of ruining it," says Moore slyly. "I can't give away any of the big secrets. The back-up feature is a piece on the world the fictional characters live in. We're trying to give a travel guide to the fictional world. It's a Herculean task. The first covers the British Isles. The second will cover Europe and the next will cover America and then Africa, Asia and the Polar Regions. And this will be the last series that has this line-up of people in it. They won't all get to the end of the second series."

Yet, if Moore and O'Neill have proven anything, it's that you can't keep a good classic down.

Research for this feature was a blast. We'd like to thank Alan Moore, Kevin O'Neill and various Websites for their contributions. For further reference, we recommend checking out a wonderful site at **www.enjolrasworld.com/annotations.htm**. *Also, hit your local library to find novels such as* Dracula, *the Alan Quatermain novels,* War of the Worlds *and the other classics referred to in LoEG.*

CASTING call

ALEX ROSS casts the BATTLE OF THE PLANETS MOVIE!

With Hollywood always looking for the next blockbuster franchise, we thought a "Battle of the Planets" flick would make a perfect summer must-see! Outer-space action, fiery special effects and five hot, young stars portraying the science ninjas of the Gatchaman project would be packing butts in the seats from May to October! Heck, we even asked artist Alex Ross, who does covers, layouts and art direction for Top Cow's *Battle of the Planets* comic, for his take on this "Casting Call"!

"I've never seen eye to eye with Hollywood the way they do things, but if they came to me and wanted a new design, I would offer up my version," notes Ross.

ASHTON KUTCHER as JASON

Jason's the hotheaded ladies' man of the G-Force team, but he's also got a mean streak in him when the action gets fierce. Kutcher ("That '70s Show") has got boyish charm, a lean physique—and slightly psycho look! "Ashton's got the hair, too!" exclaims Ross. "But Jason's got a bad attitude, more than anything, so Kutcher would need to act better than he's ever done. He can't be a goofball for this part."

BARRY WATSON as MARK

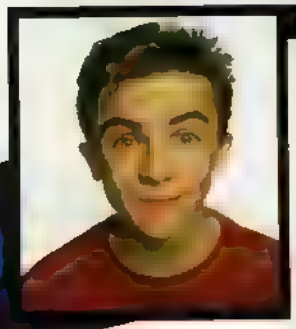
Watson portrays the eldest son on the WB family drama, "7th Heaven." Watson's dependability and desire to always do the right thing make him perfect to play G-Force's leader. "He's got that kind of personality, the young rock star-looking guy," says Ross of Watson. "He's got that '70s-ish hair, and that intensity in his eyes, too."

MENA SUVARI as **PRINCESS**

Princess is a graceful dancer at heart, but when called upon, she can kick major ass! Ross likes Mena Suvari ("American Beauty") simply on looks alone. "It's a character meant to look like a young girl, so Suvari would be good," observes Ross. "Just because she's got the right eyes. Those huge, f---ing eyes. And she's not so famous she'd be above doing it."

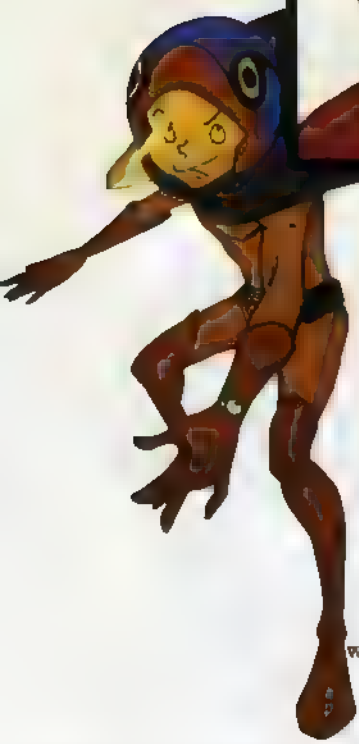
NICK VON ESMARCH as **TINY**

Von Esmarch played Nikki Cox's massive but lovable husband on the former WB sitcom "Nikki." He's a natural to pull off the role of Tiny, G-Force's resident strong man and pilot of the fiery *Phoenix* ship! "Tiny's the easiest one to cast," explains Ross. "All you need's the big bulky guy, the best friend-type character."



FRANKIE MUNIZ as **KEYOP**

Muniz can be seen weekly playing the lead role on the hilarious Fox sitcom "Malcolm in the Middle." The spunky Muniz would be a good choice to portray the reluctant Keyop, the youngest but ultimately deadliest member of G-Force. "Frankie's got the right face, and he can do the right kind of acting," says Ross. "He's entering high school on his show, so as long as he doesn't sprout up too much, he'd be perfect."



MARILYN MANSON as **ZOLTAR**

The androgynous shock rocker would be a perfect choice to take on the role of Zoltar, the sexually ambiguous leader of the evil alien invaders known as Spectra! "Manson would be great to pull off this part," enthuses Ross. "He'd be hysterical. And I would go with Heather Graham ("From Hell") to play his surprise 'sister.'"

ROSS: PAUL SCHEER/JEFF KUTNER, MERV: ERIC MASON/WB, RYNO: TIM PERSENTING STAR, ESMARCH, MANSON: PAUL FENTON/RETNA STAR

THE MOORE THE MERRIER

CLAYBURN MOORE

Face it, comic fans, you just hit the jackpot!

At least, that's what we think based on Dynamic Forces' new retro line of busts and dioramas that feature powerful moments from Marvel history—and some things we wish could have happened! Wolverine, Spidey, Hulk and others will be immortalized by master sculptor Clayburn Moore.

MARY JANE'S 1st APPEARANCE The line's first bust features Mary Jane Watson (at right) from her first appearance in *Amazing Spider-Man* (vol. 1) #42—the instant she first rocked Peter Parker's world. The bust ships in February, and comes in two editions: 1,000 8-inch busts and 300 12-inch pieces.

HULK VS. HULK "While not from a specific image," said Moore, "this sculpture will be an incredibly dramatic fight scene featuring a Hulk sculpted in the very early style [an homage to Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko] and a modern style with more muscular and vascular detail *à la* Dale Keown. What a great opportunity for a sculptor!"

UNCANNY X-MEN #172 COVER This cover shows an invitation to Wolverine's wedding...with a samurai sword thrust through it. "That cover by Paul Smith represents an important period in Wolverine's life," said Moore. "I feel that Paul Smith's elegant work at that time was some of the finest of these characters ever rendered."

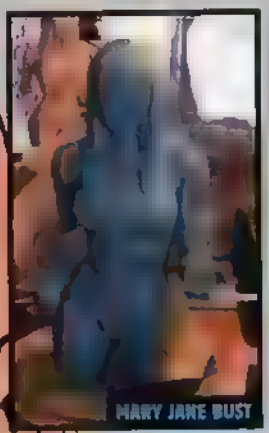
SILVER SURFER (vol. 1) #4 COVER The cover featured the Surfer facing off against the God of Thunder, Thor. "This piece will include gold plating on Thor and silver electroplate on the Surfer," described Nick Barrucci, president of Dynamic Forces. "It will be a very limited, highly detailed piece, which represents one of John Buscema's finest works."

UNCANNY X-MEN #132 LAST PANEL The fifth statue takes Wolverine from the John Byrne X-era when Wolverine clawed his way through the sewers to reach his imprisoned teammates being held captive by the Hellfire Club (pictured below). "Byrne gave a look to Wolverine that established a standard for that character," noted Barrucci. "This image of Wolverine captures the ferocity and single-mindedness of the character that Byrne conveyed so well."

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #1 (1962) COVER "The cover is one of the single greatest images from the history of comics," enthused Moore. "In a series of important Marvel cover sculptures, it is an absolute must."

Starting at $89.95 and up, the dioramas and busts will become available starting in early 2003. Check out **www.moorecreations.com** and **www.dynamicforces.com** for updates on these and other projects! ■ JENNIFER M. CONTINO

UNCANNY X-MEN #132



MARY JANE BUST

video game
STUFF

PLAYING THE GAME

How to pitch your own video game

Think you got what it takes to create the next *Spider Man* or *Batman: Vengeance*?

That's exactly what comic creators Joe Kelly (*JLA*), Joe Casey (*Adventures of Superman*), Duncan Rouleau (*Action Comics Featuring Superman*) and Steven T. Seagle (*The Crusades*) were striving for when they joined forces and formed Man of Action (**www.manofaction.tv**), an effort to combine their talents to produce superhero-inspired concepts for other media such as film, television and gaming. They're currently hard at work on pitching a video game called *Atom X* (see images throughout), which drops players into an open-ended superhero quest where they have to master newfound super abilities—and decide whether to be good or evil.

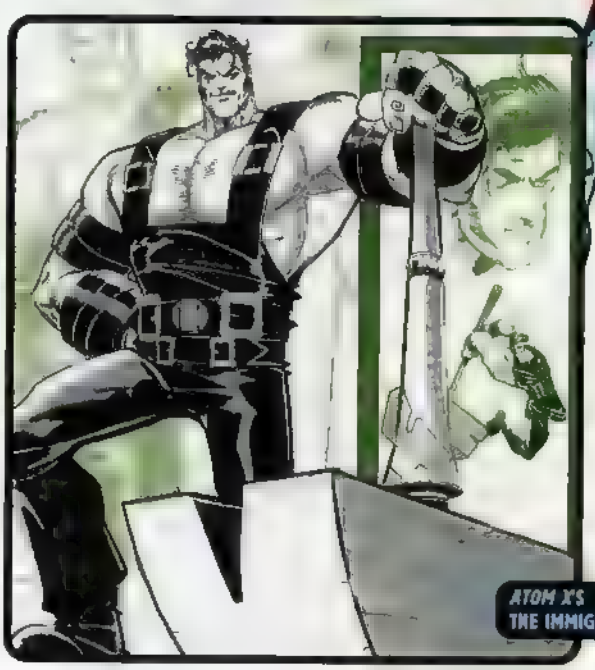
The guys at MOA were cool enough to walk us through the long and involved process, so if you're thinking about creating your own video game, keep readin'.

Step 1: THE IDEA The MOA team warns that creating a viable concept is much more than just, "This would make a cool game because. ..." "Interactivity is the key," explains Rouleau. "The concept, the gameplay and the story all should provide not only the sense of being player driven, but truly deliver on that."

Casey adds that an original concept that'll get you noticed doesn't hurt either. "In the case of *Atom X*, we wanted to come on strong with a superhero game that stood apart from the rest," he explains. "If you wanted to play as Spidey, there's a Spidey game—same with Superman, same with Batman, the list goes on. So the idea boils down to 'What if you could see a character's origin in classic superhero style, but guide his development toward either good or evil?' You start as a kid who gets powers, but what you do with them is completely open—and the world responds accordingly."

Step 2: GET THE BALL ROLLING Now that you've got the basic idea, how do you go about transforming this from cool premise to great video game?

"Four guys spitballing with no reference point isn't always productive," jokes Kelly. "So the 'point man' comes up with a spine of an idea, and the rest of us start building from there. Once we had the spine, it was coming up with scenarios and characters that best reflect the themes we wanted to emphasize. This is the stage where



ATOM X'S THE IMMIGRANT

ATOM X

every idea is pitched, debated and kept or killed. Then, the skeleton is divided among us. Finally, the point man polishes the whole thing and 40 pages later, we've got 'The Atom X Design Document.' Coupled with Duncan's art, this is the item that we'll use to court developers and publishers."

Step 3: THE PITCH So you have the makings of a great game, but how do you get it into the hands of the powers that be? Kelly sums it up in four words: "Get a good agent."

"Getting hooked up with one will make all the difference in the world," he stresses. "[We chose] a person with vision and drive who not only wants to sell us and our work, but wants to do so our way."

After that, it's all downhill. "Once we've pitched it to our agent, we get the hell out of the way and let the real pitching occur," Casey laughs. "He's the one with the contacts. We're just the mad geniuses."

Step 4: THE NEGOTIATION The team can't stress the importance of doing your homework before venturing out to land that big deal. "Know the landscape before you get into it," says Rouleau. "Talk to a lot of people. Hire representation. Make sure you know what you want. You do not get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate."

"If it isn't in the contract, it isn't real," reiterates Seagle. "So when the legal document comes around, read every word of it. If you don't understand every word, get a lawyer to explain it to you."

And don't forget to stick to your guns. "Remember, the other guy wants as much as he can get without paying, plain and simple," notes Kelly. "So don't be embarrassed about asking for what YOU want. And you have to be willing to walk away, or you have nothing."

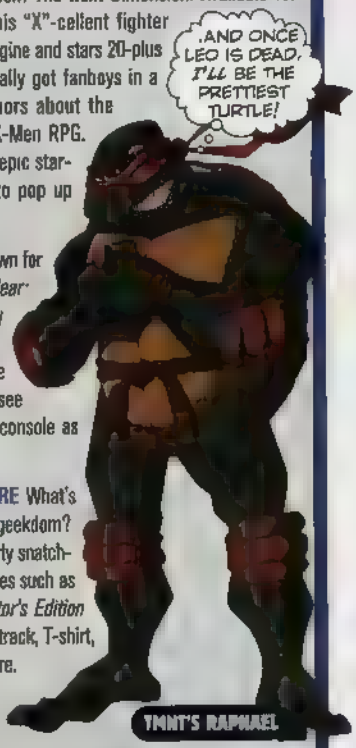
Step 5: SEALING THE DEAL "We're proud to announce that Warthog, a hot game developer from England, has signed on to develop *Atom X* with Man of Action," beams Kelly. "They have the creativity and the technology to make *Atom X* a reality and love the property as much as we do.

Landing a red-hot developer is a major step, which greatly increases a product's likelihood for success. "Getting a developer on board is a major coup," admits Kelly. "Warthog will blast open publishers doors faster than we could alone. From here, who knows, but the future is looking bright for *Atom X*!" And perhaps, for your idea, too! So get crackin'! ■ JAMES McDONOUGH

videorumblings

BITS AND BYTES!

VIDEO X-CITEMENT If you haven't already, run out and grab yourself a copy of *Activision's X-Men: The Next Dimension*. Available for GAMECUBE, PS2 and Xbox, this "X"-cellent fighter features an all-new, fully 3-D engine and stars 20-plus X-Men all-stars! But what's really got fanboys in a lather are the persistent rumors about the development of a top-secret X-Men RPG. Count on a *Final Fantasy*-style epic starring Marvel's Merry Mutants to pop up sometime in 2004.



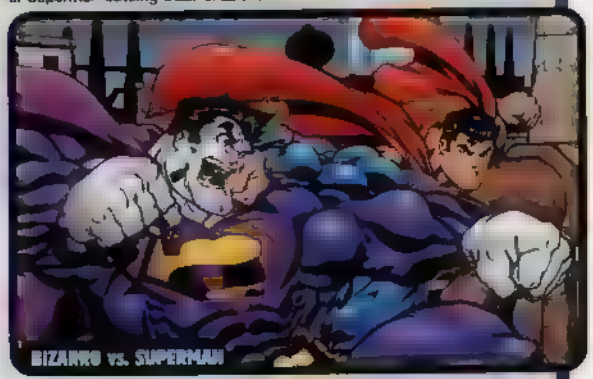
SHELLSHOCK Konami, best known for their highly successful *Metal Gear Solid Snake* series, has recently landed the rights to produce games based on the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Expect to see the Fab Four on your favorite console as early as Christmas 2003.

STRICTLY FOR THE HARDCORE What's the latest trend sweeping video geekdom? Collectibles! Rabid fans are eagerly snatching up rare videogame collectibles such as the *Robotech: Battlecry Collector's Edition* that features the game, a soundtrack, T-shirt, trading cards, dog tags and more.

STREET CRED Hurray for fight fans! Capcom is once again showing the Street Fighter love. Not only will they re-release the Dreamcast classic *Marvel Versus Capcom 2* for PS2 and Xbox this November, but the video giant also announced an all-new fighter coming soon to Tokyo. The fully 3-D fighting game features *Street Fighter* legends like Ryu, Nash and Chun Li. Hardcore Capcom fans will also note appearances by Strider Hiryu, *Final Fight*'s Mike Haggar and Akira from the *Rival School* series.

HEROES ONLINE PT. 2 And the winner is... Vivendi Universal Games! Seems the publisher–and not Sony Online Entertainment, who we reported last issue was actively pursuing the license–has won the rights to develop and produce massively multiplayer online (MMO) video games based on Marvel characters. The first of these games will debut in 2005.

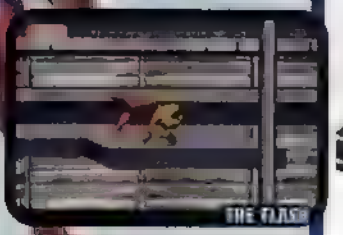
SUPER ART How serious is Infogrames of this November's *Superman: The Man of Steel* (Xbox) about staying true to the game's comic roots? Well, the team went so far as to call upon the considerable talents of super artists Pascual Ferry, Scott McDaniel and Ed McGuinness to provide original illustrations for the game's loading sequences. Check out McGuinness' rendition below of Superman battling Bizarro. ■ JMcD



sneakpeek

'JUSTICE' FOR ALL

Fans of the world's greatest superheroes can finally rejoice—Midway's GBA title *Justice League: Injustice for All* will be here just in time for Christmas. But this isn't just a job for Superman. This side-scrolling action title lets gamers take control of the entire Justice League—including Batman, Superman, Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkgirl, Martian Manhunter and Wonder Woman—as they take on the Joker, Lex Luthor and the rest of the infamous Injustice League. Excited? Hopefully, these exclusive screenshots will tide you over. ■ MkD



"JUSTICE" SERVED Top to bottom: pixelized versions of Martian Manhunter, Superman and more!

HEAVEN AND 'HALO'

'Halo 2' is coming, but not soon enough

"Obsession" is hardly the word. When Bungie Studios' *Halo: Combat Evolved* was released last November with Microsoft's Xbox, little did we know what lay in store. Most evenings, there was a mad dash for the office of Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum, where a TV, an Xbox and *Halo* were permanent fixtures. *Halo* parties with four copies of the game, four consoles, and 16 wide-eyed zombies were the norm.

Knowing there are thousands of people around the world just like us, Bungie has smartly begun developing *Halo 2*, which will be blasting its way into our hearts Holiday 2003.

With snazzy new graphics, more intense firefights and brand-new weapons and vehicles, players will also be able to play as the enemy and fight on a field against opponents over the internet thanks to the coming Xbox Live!

"We still have the multiplayer game-types that people loved in *Halo*, but we're planning something special for multiplayer in *Halo 2*," hints Jaime Griesemer, the game's lead designer. "Imagine the essential *Halo* single-player experience: pitched battles between the humans and the Covenant, massive vehicle and infantry engagements. Now imagine that every combatant is an actual person playing over Xbox Live!"

"*Halo 2* is a lot like *Halo*," adds Jason Jones, head of Bungie. "Only it's *Halo* on fire, going 130 miles per hour through a hospital zone, and being chased by helicopters and ninjas—and the ninjas are all on fire, too!"

Gadzooks! Too bad it's a year off. In the meantime, it's more *Combat Evolved* for us. We'll manage. ■ MIKEY BENCIC

HALO'S MASTER CHIEF

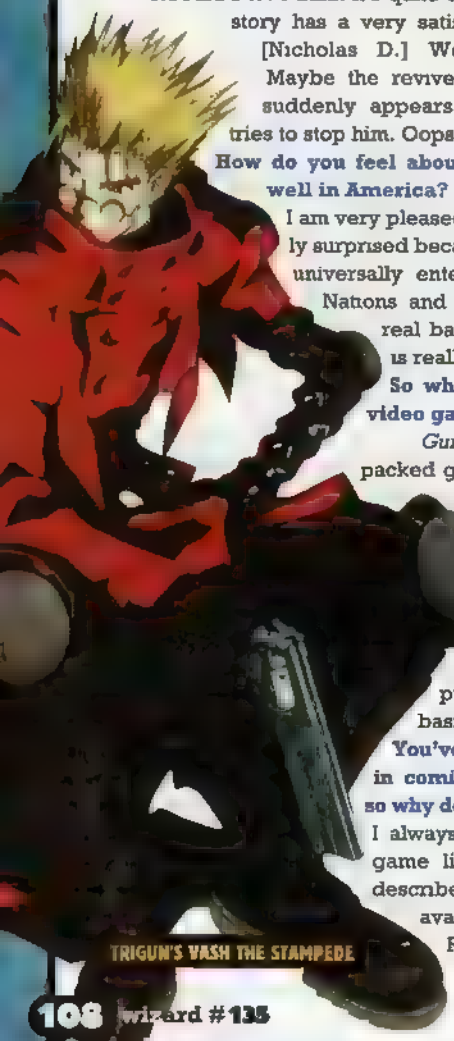
manga MANIA!

COOL JAPANESE COMIC AND ANIMATION NEWS YOU NEED TO KNOW...

'TRIGUN' WARRIOR

Famed creator talks up his new video game, anime and possible 'Trigun' sequel

Not satisfied with conquering the world of anime and manga, superstar creator Yasuhiro Nightow has set his sights on video games with Sega's *Gungrave* for the PS2. Following in the gun-blazing footsteps of his world-famous *Trigun* manga series, the game features non-stop, pistol-packing action as an undead hero returns from the grave seeking revenge—with his coffin for a weapon! *Wizard* recently caught up with Nightow for a short chat.



TRIGUN'S VASH THE STAMPEDE

WIZARD: Is it true that after the *Trigun Maximum* manga you'll do another "Trigun" series?

NIGHTOW: I think it's quite difficult because the story has a very satisfying ending, and [Nicholas D.] Wolfwood is dead. Maybe the revived Mech Wolfwood suddenly appears and Milly's child tries to stop him. Oops, sorry!

How do you feel about *Trigun* doing so well in America?

I am very pleased, but I wasn't totally surprised because *Trigun* is full of universally entertaining elements. Nations and cultures are not a real barrier if the product is really cool.

So what's the *Gungrave* video game about?

Gungrave is an action-packed gun battle that even a beginner can easily play. All the objects on the screen are in flux and can be blown away. It was all put together on the basis of that.

You've had great success in comics and animation, so why do a video game?

I always wanted to play a game like the one I just described, but none were available. [Developer] Red Entertainment

GUNGRAVE

and [publisher] Sega gave me the chance to create one.

Gungrave was conceived and planned from the beginning as a game. I wanted it to be something you could easily play for just a short time, so I used the "Crazy Taxi" series as a reference. Anyway, we plan to do a "Gungrave" anime as well! Action figures will also be available very soon! The quality will be unbelievably great!

What're the differences between working on video games and on animation or comics?

In manga and animation, it's possible to a certain extent to control the order and timing with which things are shown, as well as their impact. For a video game, that's not possible. I think it's a matter of whether the heart of the pleasure lies in the flow of the story or in the interaction between the player and the system.

In design, I always bear in mind how that character appears and moves on the screen. For instance, Grave always has his back to the player, so I began with drawing a rear view of him.

Would you ever like to do a *Trigun* video game?

I would love to make something like that happen. I think a network game allowing the player to live on that sandy planet and have adventures would be great.

So what's next for you?

I'm currently working to finish the *Trigun Maximum* manga and helping with the animations for the "Gungrave" anime. Other projects are still quite unclear and I cannot say anything about them right now.

■ JAMES PADOUNOU

ANIME BUZZBOX

JAPANESE RUMOR MILL

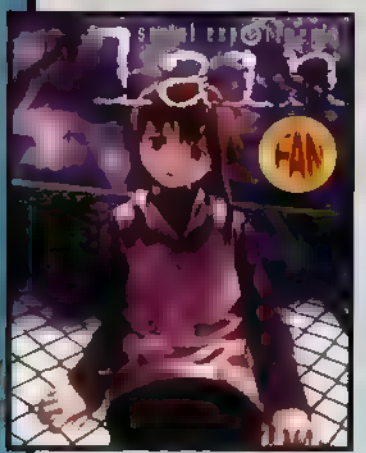
NINJA HIGH SCHOOL Antarctic Press is marking Ben Dunn's (*Marvel Mangaverse*) 100th issue of *Ninja High School* by naming November "Ninja High School Month." The centennial issue of the Amen-manga series will boast a commemorative cover by Dunn as well as three variants by other AP artists Fred Perry, Rod Espinosa and Robert DeJesus. The issue itself will also wrap up some long-dangling plotlines and don't be surprised to see a death or two! "Ninja High School Month" will also be marked by the release of an *NHS*-themed *How to Draw Manga, Mangazine, Swimsuit Special, High School Textbook*, as well as a cap, T-shirt and poster. Congratulations, Ben!

PLASTIC NIRVANA Don't look now, but a company in Japan has just begun offering Gundam and Macross VISA cards to its anime-crazed customers, and the response has been overwhelming! No word yet on whether American banks will follow suit.

BUBBLEGUM POP American anime fans, keep your eyes peeled for Dreamwave's lithos based on the wildly popular *Bubblegum Crisis* series. The first litho, by *Liberty Meadows* creator Frank Cho (right), hits this January with a follow-up by Dan Norton in February. Finally, Mr. G-T himself, Pat Lee, will debut his rendition of the Bubblegum girls sometime in the spring.

KNOW YOUR ROLE Here's a different and fantastic way to enjoy your favorite anime: roleplaying games! Guardians of Order (**www.guardiansorder.com**) is set to add Pioneer's *Armitage III* and *Nies_7* to its collection of anime RPG guides, which double as cool resources for fans. All guides feature detailed episode summaries, in-depth character profiles, hundreds of spectacular images from the series and many pages of production line art. Also on the horizon are guides on *Slayers* and *Revolutionary Girl Utena*. Guardians' other licensed books include guides on *Trigun, Serial Experiments Lain* and *Sailor Moon*, so you can immerse yourselves into the worlds of your favorite properties!

■ THE WIZARD STAFF



BARE BALLZ

Uncensored 'Dragon Ball Z' hits DVD

Sex. Violence. And over a dozen episodes worth of "Dragon Ball Z" you've never seen before will finally be seen.

FUNimation, DBZ's licensor, plans to re-release all of the first two seasons of "DBZ" on DVD in 2003, uncut and unedited for the first time ever!

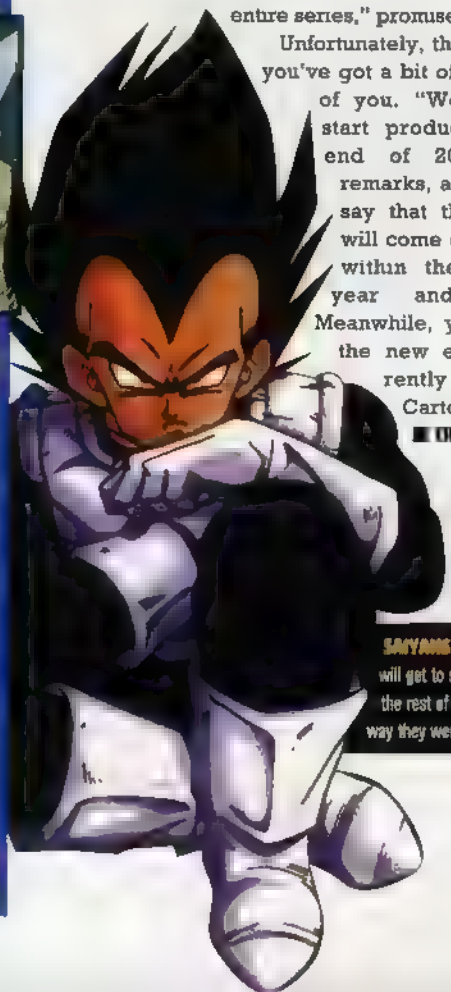
Before Cartoon Network, "DBZ" had to be heavily edited and censored for basic TV broadcast. In fact, so many minutes of animation were cut that 13 episodes worth of footage was lost! When Pioneer released the DVDs and tapes of these early episodes, they were of the censored versions, and lacked the original Japanese dialogue tracks as well.

While many fans lamented they would never get to see them, FUNimation heard their plea. "They will be treated as our most recent releases when we do go back and release them," explains Dave Moran, a spokesman for FUNimation. That means all the missing pieces will be put back in, the rest of the action will be uncensored and the DVDs will come with both English and the original Japanese language tracks. And since they are effectively added 13 new episodes, in order to keep the episode numbering in tact, they will use a letter scale—for example, Episode 34A, 34B, etc.

More incredibly, FUNimation has opted to record these early episodes—which used a mostly different voice cast—using the current voices! "Dragon Ball Z will have consistent voices throughout all 290-plus episodes of the entire series," promises Moran.

Unfortunately, the bad news is you've got a bit of a wait ahead of you. "We'll probably start production by the end of 2002," Moran remarks, and went on to say that the new discs will come out "probably within the next year, year and a half." Meanwhile, you can catch the new episodes currently airing on Cartoon Network.

■ CHRISTIAN NUTT



SAIYANS UNCENSORED Fans will get to see Vegeta (left) and the rest of the "DBZ" crew the way they were meant to be seen.

HOT IMPORTS

COMING SOON

MANGA

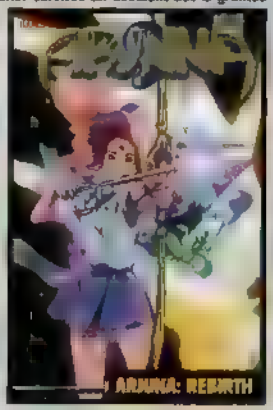
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL #73: FALL FROST PART 1 (OF 6) (Dark Horse) En route to what will surely be a bloody battle against Shira, Manji and traveling partner Magatsu share a short journey peppered with light-hearted moments, but don't worry–there will be plenty of sword fighting. $2.99

CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON GN #1 (ComicsOne) This Chinese manga details events that predate and follow the scenes depicted in the hit film, rendered in glorious detail by Andy Seto. $13.95

EDEN'S TRAIL #1 (OF 6) (Marvel) In this anime-inspired mini-series drawn and written by newcomer Steve Uy, a futuristic hero embarks on a mysterious quest and stumbles upon the secrets of the universe. $2.99

SHONEN JUMP VOL. 1 #1 (Viz) The English edition of Japan's best-selling manga anthology hits with strips from *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, *Dragon Ball Z*, *Yu Yu Hakusho* and others. $4.95

ANIME



ARJUNA: REBIRTH (Bandai) An expert archer survives an accident but is granted powers to defend the Earth from an evil bent on the planet's destruction. DVD–$29.98

GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES (Central Park Media) Not a typical animated movie, as this 1988 Studio Ghibli production deals with the cruel face of war and its impact on innocent victims, like the two children in this powerful, moving film. Part of CPM's Collector's Series. DVD–$29.99

FUSHIGI YÛGI THE MYSTERIOUS PLAY: EIKODEN (Pioneer) A jealous young girl infatuated with a married man uses mystical powers to kidnap his wife's unborn baby, then all heck breaks loose. DVD–$29.98; LIM. ED. DVD–$39.98

ZONE OF ENDERS VOL. 2: DOLORES (ADV Films) A hard-drinking cargo hauler trying to reconcile with his estranged wife is plunged into a mysterious adventure after the Orbital Frame Dolores hitches a ride on his carrier ship, *Ender*. DVD–$29.98

STUFF

ROBOTECH TRADING CARDS (Hero Factory) Relive the classic series with this 72-card base set that includes scenes from each of the three sagas in the *Robotech* universe. Six cards per pack, 24 packs per box. (November) $TBD

DRAGON BALL Z I-MEN COLLECTION TWO-PACKS (Toynami) Included in each two-pack is a cubular, fully articulated DBZ mini-figure and a Super Saiyan mini-figure with light-up action! Goku, Vegeta (right), Piccolo and more! (December) $9.99

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS? STORY IDEAS? DROP US A LINE AT
MANGAMANIA@WIZARDWORLD.COM

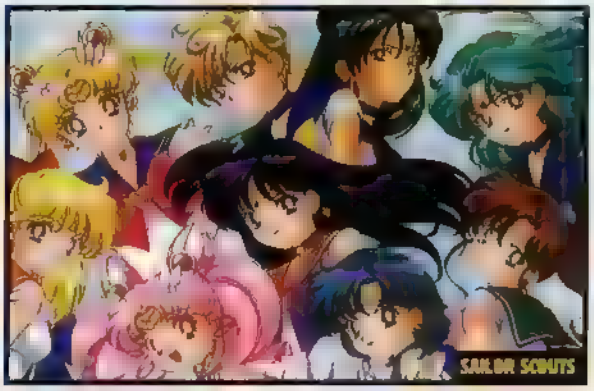
SAILOR BOON

ADV supplies your Sailor Scout fix

If you're one of the thousands of fans lamenting over Cartoon Network's decision to pull "Sailor Moon" off the air, here's an awesome alternative: Buy the episodes on DVD!

In November, ADV Films will release the 11th and 12th DVD volumes of their Sailor Moon series, which collects all 82 episodes of the first two seasons, "Sailor Moon" and "Sailor Moon R." Each volume collects about six episodes and fans can purchase the previous 10 volumes through ADV at their Website, **www.advfilms.com.**

"Sailor Moon" is the tale of a 14-year-old girl and her friends who are the reincarnations of a powerful princess and her court and are endowed with mystical powers to combat the evil forces of the Negaverse. ■ JOHN B. LAKEY



MANGA MARVELS

Editor lures Japanese A-list talent to U.S.

Remember when Marvel Associate Editor C.B. Cebulski first joined the House of Ideas, he mentioned he was going to bring some of his friends in the manga and anime industry to the publisher (*Wizard* #128)?

Well, Cebulski is a man of his word, and on top of Kia Asamiya (*Dark Angel*) jumping on *Uncanny X-Men* in December, look out for the following:

Makoto Nakamika (*Star Wars Tales*) will be working with J. Torres (*Sidekicks*) on the next Mangaverse mini-series, *X-Men Ronin*; Tsutomu Nihei (*Blame!*) is working on an as-yet-unnamed Wolverine project; and Katsuya Terada (*Blood: The Last Vampire*) is working on Iron Man and X-Men covers. Also reportedly in the wings for pin-ups and covers are Emuko Iwasaki (who worked on the *Guilty Gear* video game), Takehiko Ito (*Outlaw Star*), Yoko Mera (*Samurai Showdown*), Mizuki Sakabayashi (Capcom) and Shin "Jason" Nagasawa (designer for *Final Fantasy* video games). ■ JBL

SECRET STASH comics' hidden gems

THE GOON

DRINKIN' BREW, STOMPIN' ZOMBIE ASS AND PLAYING BY HIS OWN RULES—IT'S ALL IN A DAY'S WORK FOR THE GOON

THE DIRT In an unnamed city, the streets are overrun by zombie gangsters, mutated fish-man mobsters and crazy voodoo priests, but they all fear one thing—*The Goon*! He's part Wolverine, part Dick Tracy and part Batman, and you can catch his off-the-wall trials and tribulations in a quarterly series aptly titled *The Goon*, brought to you by series creator Eric Powell and Albatross Exploding Funny Books.

DOYA LIKE? Take *Hellboy*-esque adventures, mix in Batman's Rogues and Wolverine's disposition and you get a pretty good idea of what *The Goon*'s all about.

DIDJA KNOW? The Goon first appeared in the now defunct *Dark Horse Presents*, but that wasn't Powell's only brush with mainstream stardom. He's also done *Buffy* and *Star Wars* Tales stories for the Horse as well as ink work for Marvel's *Incredible Hulk* and *The Hood*.

If you're tired of high concept indy comics chock fulla inspirational messages and life-changing morals, then *The Goon* was made for you.

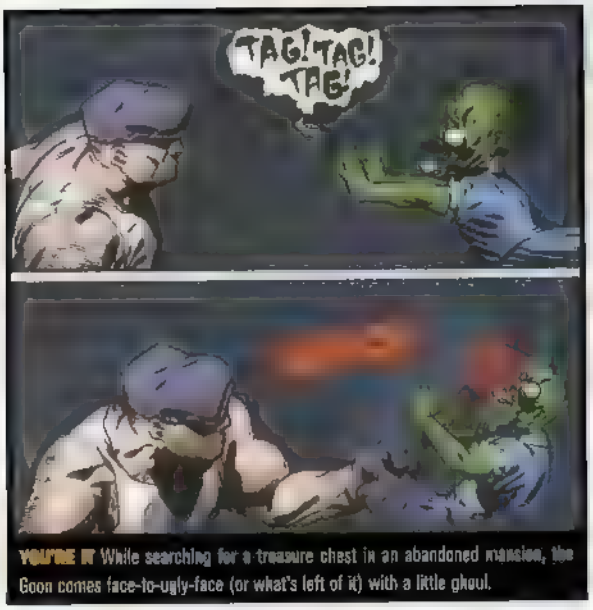
"My whole concept behind *The Goon* was I wanted to see a big, Frankensteinish guy that could fight monsters and punch stuff," deadpans series creator Eric Powell. "So I mixed a bunch of elements of stuff that I like, like Mafia stories, Universal horror-type stuff and zombies, and what came out was an interesting concept that I don't think I've ever really even seen in comics before."

The creator makes a solid point there, because there's definitely no other book on the stands like *The Goon*. Powell describes the overall premise of the quarterly series as "a crazy story, completely insane with no boundary to it," and based on the Goon's first few appearances, that's an accurate description.

Let's start with the over-the-top yet hilarious acts of random violence, which *The Goon* has in spades. When the Goon made his first appearance in 2000's *Dark Horse Presents* #157, he and his Little Orphan Annie-eyed sidekick Frankie managed to not only paralyze a werewolf after Goon smashed him with a U.S. mailbox, but also take down an entire crime syndicate made up of mutated fish-men for no reason other than they happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. In last August's *The Goon Color Special*, the Goon first appears battling a giant squid that's attached itself to the hood of his car!

Then there's that special brand of humor that I had assumed only someone like Garth Ennis could pull off. In the color special, the Goon and Frankie took up treasure hunting in a haunted house full of inbred, cannibalistic ghosts. Naturally, the issue ended with the two main characters wrecking shop in clever-yet-disturbing ways (involving both an ax and a necklace made of cats' eyes), but not before Frankie's mind became possessed by demons and he thought he was being attacked by a sandwich. Yes, a sandwich.

In November's *The Goon* #1, the oddball cast of supporting characters and villains come to the forefront, especially the Goon's archenemy, known only as The Priest. After a brief cameo in *DHP* and a mention in the color special, the Priest is revealed as a demented-yet-utterly-pathetic voodoo witchdoctor whose only mission is to kill the Goon's employers, the Labrazio Family, thus rendering the



YOU'RE IT While searching for a treasure chest in an abandoned mansion, the Goon comes face-to-ugly-face (or what's left of it) with a little ghoul.

Goon an unemployed hired thug. At the end of the story, the Priest is met with a revelation that puts his single-minded goal into a new perspective.

The world of comics—both mainstream and indy—needs more books like *The Goon*. The only moral I picked up on was it doesn't pay to be a zombie and an ornery supernatural, 'cause the Goon ain't gonna take your guff. He doesn't wage a never-ending crusade against crime (or really take the time to differentiate between right and wrong) and so far there's no reason for him to avenge anything or anybody. This guy just loves to crack undead skulls!

Powell's art is perfectly suited for the Goon's brand of enforcing. The mix of influences, ranging from Will Eisner, Mike Mignola and lots of EC horror comics, make for a detailed yet animated style that enhances the off-the-wall stories. Likewise, Powell's character design for the Goon (who resembles a buck-toothed thug straight outta the Dick Tracy comic strips) makes him one of the coolest looking characters in recent memory.

When Powell boldly declares that *The Goon* is a series where anything can happen, that's not hyperbole. In upcoming issues, we'll see the Goon take a break from pummeling zombies and monsters for a trip into space to take on...you guessed it, space monsters. It's as simple as that, folks. Lewis Carroll couldn't come up with a series like this.

Let me make it clear: I love this series, and my only complaint is I wish it was monthly rather than quarterly. Be sure and pick up a copy of *The Goon*; I'm betting you'll enjoy it. If not, the Goon will come over and make you.

THE LAST WORD Outstanding art, laugh-out-loud story-arcs and a big lug who passes the time kicking monster ass...what's not to love about *The Goon*? Plus, there's no pesky morals or messages that get in the way. Every comic should be this fun to read! ■ **CASEY SELLS**

WANNA DIG THIS SERIES UP?

HIDE 'N' SEEK

TRACK THESE BABIES DOWN

Does *The Goon* sound like a great read? Then why not give this book a shot? And check out the Ignatz Awards Special Report!

SLOPPY SECONDS It's a crazy, mixed-up world out there, but luckily Debbie St. Sinclair and Dave Crosland are around to make sense of it all in their amazing mini-comic, simply titled *Slop*.

Offering commentary on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from dating in the new millennium to the overbearing military authority, *Slop* manages to educate without preaching. Take the short story "Patience Gets You Nowhere, Tolerance Gets You Hurt," which basically follows the all-too-stereotypical viewpoints of a girl who loves being hurt by an abusive boyfriend and a guy with absolutely no self-esteem as they describe their ideal mate in the '00s. Even the one-page, one-panel "Kung Fu Busboy" strips offer insight to the world around us, which sometimes can prove to be a very lonely place.

St. Sinclair's talent at crafting short stories and Crosland's ghetto-fabulous art style make *Slop* a mini-comic that stands out from the rest, and definitely deserves a read. For info on ordering a copy of your own, e-mail the creators at **debbie@tichicken.com**. $2.

And the Ignatz Goes To... *Wizard* would like to take this opportunity to congratulate this year's Ignatz Award winners! The awards celebrate outstanding achievement in the small press and were handed out at this year's Small Press Expo in Bethesda, Maryland on Saturday, Sept. 7, 2002. Among the winners were:

Outstanding Artist: Megan Kelso, *Artichoke Tales* #1, *Nan* #5 (Highwater Books, Red Ink Press)

Outstanding Graphic Novel or Collection: James Sturm, *The Golem's Mighty Swing* (Drawn & Quarterly)

Outstanding Story: Scott Mills, *Trenches* (Top Shelf Productions)

Promising New Talent: Greg Cook, *Catch as Catch Can* (Highwater Books)

Outstanding Series: James Kochalka, *Sketchbook Diaries* (Top Shelf Productions)

Outstanding Comic: Daniel G. Clowes, *Eightball* #22 (Fantagraphics Books)

Outstanding Mini-Comic: Megan Kelso, *Artichoke Tales* #1 (Highwater Books)

Outstanding Web-based Comic: Jason Little, *Bee* (www.beecomix.com)

Outstanding Debut Comic: Joel Priddy, *Pulpatoon Pilgrimage* ■

'NET GAINS

COMMON CENTS COMICS

Do cheap books translate into big bucks for comic companies?

It may be hard to believe, but cheap comics aren't always sensible (no pun intended).

Just three months after *Fantastic Four* #60 (August's direct market nine-cent issue) topped the Diamond sales chart (like DC's *Batman: The 10-Cent Adventure* did in January), it appears that comics' latest promotional innovation may not have staying power.

Ultra-cheap comics are designed to entice readers to try a new book, and to hopefully continue picking up subsequent issues. But slapping on a low price tag doesn't guarantee success. Such was the case with DC/Wildstorm's 13-cent *Gen*^{13} #0 in September, which failed to create the buzz of the other cheap books.

"Chris Claremont writing *Gen*^{13} just isn't going to appeal to people at any price," offers Dan Veesenmeyer, owner of Hot Comics and Collectibles in Richfield, Minn. "The more known properties like Batman are a no-brainer. Even Mark Waid and Fantastic Four are an easier sell."

Batman and FF had tremendous success with cheap issues, but do these promotions sustain new readerships? If the advance orders for *Fantastic Four* #61 are any indication, then the answer is no.

"I ordered about 150 copies of the nine-cent issue and then about 75 of *FF* #61," says Veesenmeyer. "I'd be a fool to think that everyone who picks up a comic for nine cents will come back in for the next issue."

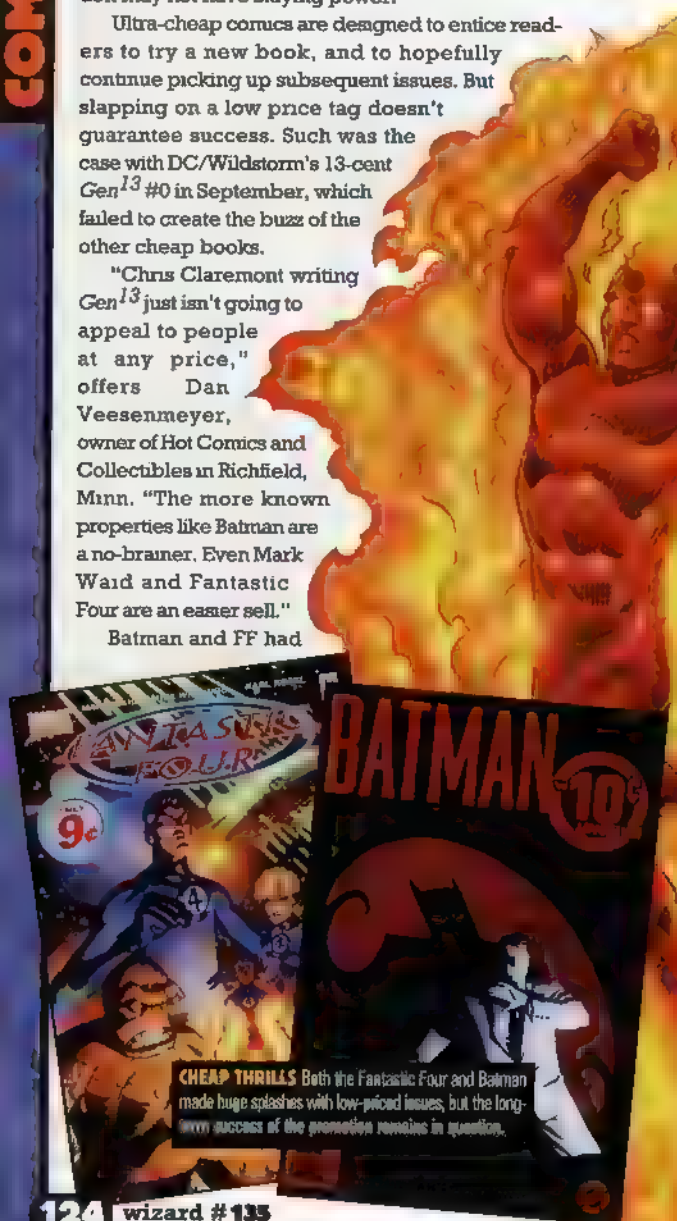
Bill Rosemann, Marvel's marketing director, counters that viewpoint. "You have to remember that the initial orders do not reflect actual reader interest, but instead merely represent retailer orders, which were made before they even read Mark [Waid] and Mike [Wieringo's] first issue," he says. "Retailers are no doubt going to find many more readers showing up asking for *FF* #61 than they're prepared to handle!"

That's a problem Kevin McGarry, owner of Acme Comics in Sioux City, Iowa, is already facing. "The FF book surprised us. We ordered nowhere near what we should have. We ordered several thousand copies of [*Batman: The 10-Cent Adventure*] and our numbers on all the Bat-titles skyrocketed after that."

Even so, eight months after the success of *The 10-Cent Adventure*, not a single Bat-book appeared in Diamond's September Top 30.

That hasn't stopped DC from forging ahead with a Superman 10-cent comic, set for January 2003 (see "Wizard News," page 22 for more details). Also, Rosemann confirms Marvel's plans to "roll back the prices on key titles throughout 2003." But given the significant Batman and FF drop-offs, can this promotion sustain itself?

It depends, says McGarry. "With the Superman book, we'll go back to ordering in the thousands because he's recognizable. But if you start to see [cheap comics] every month, readers won't even notice." ■ JIM ARSHART



CHEAP THRILLS Both the Fantastic Four and Batman made huge splashes with low-priced issues, but the long-term success of the promotion remains in question.

FUTURE IS NOW

Publisher bucks system, creates stir

Three comic veterans are changing the future of comics. Bob Layton, Dick Giordano and David Michelinie, founders of Future Comics, are exploring a brave new world of comics publishing—self-distribution.

Instead of relying on Diamond for distribution, Future Comics handles retailers' and readers' needs directly as well as offering their books through Cold Cut Distribution. The bold move has sparked buzz on Internet message boards.

"The lower-end producers have to surrender nearly two-thirds of their cover price just to get their product on the shelves," lamented Future Comics President and Editor-in-Chief Bob Layton on the current distribution system. "It's nearly impossible for an independent publisher to be profitable."

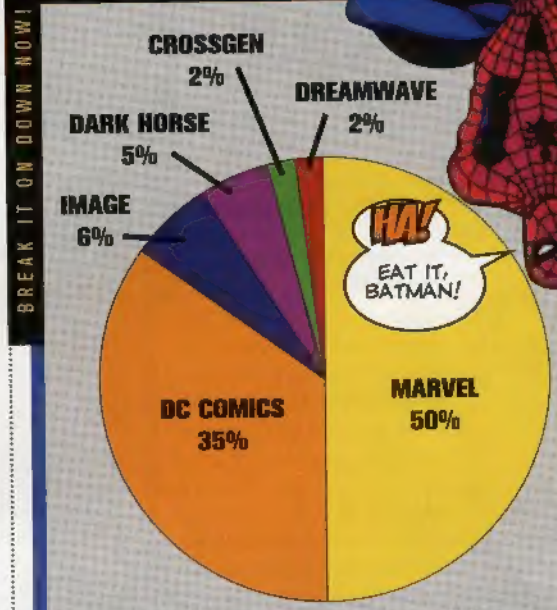
While eliminating the middleman increases publisher and retailer profitability, it also presents considerable challenges. After several mailing campaigns, many retailers were still unaware of Future's existence. Furthermore, those retailers who knew about the company were hesitant of its unconventional business plan.

However, CFO and VP of Distribution Allen Berrebbi is confident retailers will come around once they see what Future Comics can offer them. "Every time I talk to someone, they see where we're coming from," said Berrebbi. "Every week more and more retailers are signing up."

In *Freemind*, Future's first title, a scientist gains psionic powers after an experiment transfers his mind out of his crippled body and into an android substitute. The book is written by Michelinie, penciled by Giordano and co-plotted/inked by Layton. Retailers and readers can place orders directly from Future Comics at their website, **www.futurecomicsonline.com.** ■ **DAVE MARSHALL**

LINEBYLINE

BREAK IT ON DOWN NOW!



BREAKDOWN OF TITLES IN THE SEPTEMBER 2002 DIAMOND TOP 100 ACCORDING TO COMPANY

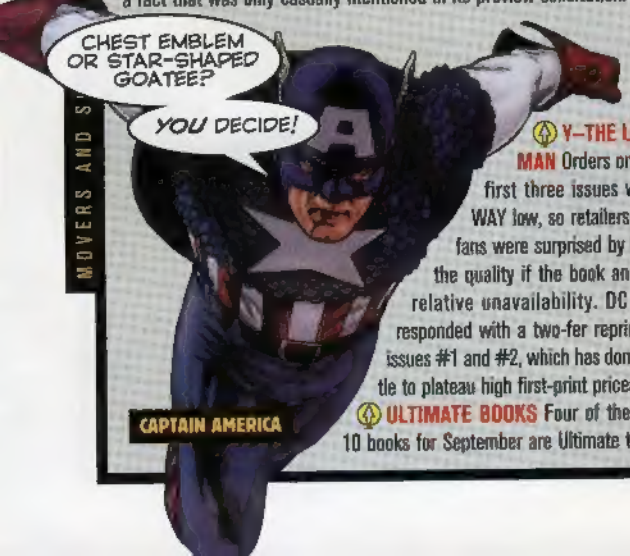
Marvel: includes Ultimate, Marvel Knights and MAX titles
DC Comics: includes Wildstorm, ABC and Vertigo titles
Image: includes Devil's Due, Top Cow and Todd McFarlane Productions titles
Dark Horse: includes various *Star Wars* titles and *KISS*
Dreamwave: includes *Transformers: Generation 1* and *Transformers: Armada*
CrossGen: includes *Sojourn* and *Ruse*

UPS & DOWNS

MOVERS AND SHAKERS OF THE INDUSTRY

CAPTAIN AMERICA Like a well-aimed adamantium shield, issues of the latest Cap series are flying off of the shelves. Even with artist John Cassaday's imminent departure, fans are eagerly anticipating the arrival of former *Cla$$war* penciler Trevor Hairsine.

CAPTAIN AMERICA: RED, WHITE & BLUE Retailers are reporting that many of the Cap-aholics who pre-ordered this hardcover are choosing not to purchase it because the book is heavily comprised of reprint material, a fact that was only casually mentioned in its preview solicitation.



Y–THE LAST MAN Orders on the first three issues were WAY low, so retailers and fans were surprised by both the quality if the book and its relative unavailability. DC has responded with a two-fer reprint of issues #1 and #2, which has done little to plateau high first-print prices.

ULTIMATE BOOKS Four of the Top 10 books for September are Ultimate titles, with two issues of *Ultimate Spidey* creeping into the number six and seven slots. Refusing to stand down, *Ultimates* is the highest ordered Marvel book, beating out stalwarts like *Amazing Spidey* and *New X-Men*.

LOEG VOL. 2 Classic literature rules! Or rather, its characters do. As issues #1 and #2 of *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen Vol. II* continue to trade heavily on the back market, issue #3's sales actually increased over those of #2! Wildstorm/ABC has critical acclaim and the upcoming film to thank. Copies of the first *League* hardcover have also been going for big bucks online.

TOP COW *Battle of the Planets* remains a Top 20 seller, but the rest of the company's output is struggling, with only *Tomb Raider* and *Witchblade* in the Top 100 (slots 80 and 83, respectively). Paul Jenkins and Dale Keown's upcoming *Darkness* series should juice up the Cow with some stronger milk.

BULLPEN LOOK BEHIND THE CURTAIN

WIZARD WEDDING BELLS

Proof positive that even comic geeks can get a life: Our own Jim McLauchlin got married.

Jim married the lovely and talented Lisa Marie Hilke in a raucous, "five-hour party with a five-minute wedding somewhere in the middle" on Aug. 31 at the posh members-only Dugout Club at Los Angeles' Dodgers Stadium.

The Right Rev. Dave Johnson, *100 Bullets* cover artist and minister of the Church of Universal Life, presided over the ceremony. A boatload of comic creator glitterartti attended, including Marc Silvestri, Michael Turner, Christian Gossett, Dan Fraga, Joe Casey, Bradley Kayl, Tone Rodriguez, Bill O'Neill, Chuck Wojtkiewicz, and Christina Z. After much alcohol was consumed and the sun went down, a number of guests hopped a fence onto the sacred Dodgers Stadium turf and ran the bases. One guest who will remain nameless (okay, it was *Violent Messiahs* writer Josh Dysart) even took off all his clothes and rolled naked in the center field grass. "A true wedding album moment," Ms. Hilke was heard to remark.

And McLauchlin? "It was halfway between a Wizard World convention and a 'Simpsons' episode," he said. "But a splendid time was had by all, especially Lisa and myself. I'm very happy to be hitched. I guess I can finally have sex now."

JIM CLASS Jim McLauchlin tapped pal Adam Kubert (*Ultimate X-Men*) to provide artwork for his wedding program.

ALSO AVAILABLE

TAKING A WIZ

ANIME INVASION #5

Learn all the ins and outs of the "Gigantor" anime series, as we break it down to the basest nuts and bolts. Also, check out our episode guide to the brand-new "Dragon Ball GT" series that's set to hit American shores, and get a look at the entire solar system from "Cowboy Bebop"!

On sale Nov. 27 in comic stores
On sale Dec. 10 everywhere

TOYFARE #65

Filmmaker Kevin Smith ("Jersey Girl") has conquered Hollywood and the comics biz; now he's got his sights on toys! Find out what Smith has to say about today's hottest toys, and what View Askew has in store for their toylines. Plus, we serve up a giant honkin' 15-page forecast of all the hot toys coming out in 2003, including Bioncles, He-Man, Star Wars and G.I. Joe!

On sale Nov. 11 in comic stores
On sale Nov. 26 everywhere

INQUEST GAMER #92

We've got a rundown of the Top 20 figures in WizKids' brand-new *Marvel HeroClix: Clobberin' Time* set, which includes the Fantastic Four, Dr. Doom, Thor, Hawkeye and loads more. We've also got a look at the shake-ups in Magic's Extended Format Tournament, as Wizards of the Coast introduces a ton of new cards and phases out a bunch more.

On sale Nov. 6 in comic stores
On sale Nov. 19 everywhere

A SNEAK PEEK

NEXT ISSUE...

THE BEST OF 2002

Who's the king of hill of the comics' hill in 2002? *Wizard* runs down the best of the best from last year, including artist, writer, hero, villain and most anticipated of all, best title! Where do your favorites–like Transformers, the Ultimate line (above) or the DCU's big guns–fit in? Find out here!

NEXT MONTH IN WIZARD #136

'X-MEN 2' SET VISIT

Visit the Vancouver location of "X-Men 2," one of the most anticipated comic sequels ever! Get the scoop on new characters like Nightcrawler, as well as plot details, set descriptions and director Bryan Singer's take on his second go-round with Marvel's Merry Mutants!

'DAREDEVIL' DIRECTOR Q&A

Sit down for a Q&A rap session with "Daredevil" director Mark Steven Johnson. What was it like bringing Marvel's Man Without Fear to the silver screen? How was working with Ben Affleck (DD/Matt Murdock) and Jennifer Garner (Elektra)? Get the 411 right from the director's chair!

RATING THE '80s REVIVAL BOOKS

With the '80s nostalgia running wild, *Wizard* pits the retro books against one another to see which one rules. We'll square off *Battle of the Planets*, *G.I. Joe*, *He-Man*, *Transformers*, *Thundercats*, *Micronauts* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* to see which title reigns supreme!

WIZARD #136

On sale November 20 in comic shops! On sale December 3 everywhere!

THE YEAR-ENDER!
WIZARD
#136
THE ABSOLUTE
BEST
OF 2002
ARTISTS · WRITERS · HERO · VILLAIN · AND MORE!
MORE
'80s
MANIA!
Ultimate Wolverine vs.
Ultimate Captain America
cover by Andy Kubert
ON SALE NOVEMBER 27, 2002
© 2002 Wizard Entertainment. Ultimate Wolverine & Ultimate Captain America™ & © 2002 Marvel Characters.
wizardworld.com

THE HOTSEAT

This Month Featuring:

BRUCE CAMPBELL

STAR OF THE "EVIL DEAD" TRILOGY

WIZARD: **You've become a huge cult hero to your fans after appearing in the "Evil Dead" films and writing your book, *If Chins Could Talk*, but be real with me, dawg. You must have had some pretty weird fan experiences. What's the weirdest?**

CAMPBELL: Well, there's a new one every day. I sign my share of breasts, though. There's one woman who comes back every year for me to sign her chest.

Nothing wrong with that. Is she hot?

She's not too bad. She's got **nice breasts,** too. [*Laughs*] Some of the weird stuff I don't mind. You meet a lot of people with freakazoid jobs, too. I met one guy who foam-injects tampons.

Ewwwwwwww! Is that even a real job or just a hobby?

It takes all kinds to fill the freeways, baby.

Now that you've conquered fans who make tampons, major movie roles and a book, what's next?

Show tunes!

...?

No, it's time for another book. I think I'll call this one, *Make Love to Bruce Campbell.*

That's smart thinking.

[*Laughs*]

You and "Spider-Man" director Sam Raimi go way back to your "Evil Dead" days. Did you ever think he'd be the guy who makes a movie that takes in over $400 million?

That's utter lunacy. We just wanted to get "Evil Dead" in theaters; now he's made a film the world loves. I can't believe it. Now he has to bear the burden of success.

And it pays to have him as a pal, right? I mean, you got to name Spider-Man in the film.

That's right, baby! Sam's very smart about giving me fun roles. He just calls me up and says, "Hey, you're playing the milkman who gets hit by a bus." By the next day, I'm in costume and under a bus somewhere.

Well, it beats the tampon gig.

That it does.

Better chin: you, Jay Leno or George Clooney?

Oh, Leno...but Clooney's got that movie star look to him. He's cool. I'll say it—George Clooney is cool!

But he doesn't have a kick-ass *Evil Dead* video game where he can play himself like you do.

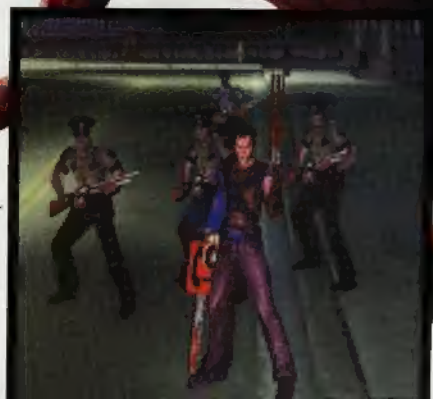
I keep getting killed in my own game, though. People always ask, "How do you like the game?" Well, I don't know! I can't get through it.

Maybe your kids can help.

My son beat it but he doesn't help me. When I was doing "Serving Sara" with Matthew Perry, even he played it.

Did he help?

No, he told me, "That ***Evil Dead* game** of yours is stupid!"

He just couldn't beat it.

Yeah, I said, "Hey, maybe the game doesn't suck, Matthew Perry! Maybe *you* suck!" [*Laughs*] ■ **MIKE COTTON**